TALES AND LEGENDS

OF THE

ISLE OF WIGHT.

WITH THE

ADVENTURES OF THE AUTHOR IN SEARCH OF THEM.

BY ABRAHAM ELDER, Esq.

. . . . . "The isle is full of noises,
Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not;
Sometimes a thousand twanging instruments
Will hum about mine ears, and sometimes voices;
That, if I then had waked after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again; and then, in dreaming,
The clouds, methought, would open, and shew riches
Ready to drop upon me; that when I waked
I cried to dream again."

TEMPEST—Act iii. Scene 2.

Part the First.

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PREFACE.

It may appear singular that the present little volume, intended to illustrate the antiquities and traditions of the people of the Isle of Wight, should come from the pen of a stranger; and that the tales it contains should have been collected during the space of a short summer ramble. Fortune, however, has favoured me much, and I take this opportunity of returning my thanks to my friend, the well-known and justly celebrated antiquary, Mr. Winterblossom, for his most valuable contributions, without which this

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collection of Tales and Legends would have been but chaff.

Lest, however, the fact of my being a stranger should operate to my disadvantage, in prejudicing the public against this work; be it remembered, that the best author upon the British constitution was De Lolme—a foreigner; and this is not the exception, but the general rule. The peculiarities of every country strike more forcibly the eye of a foreigner. Foreigners are for the most part more impartial and more diligent searchers after all that is worthy of record, than those to whom the scenes and stories have been familiar from infancy. But, after all, I must confess that I am rather a collector, compiler, or editor; though vanity (as some would term it) has induced me to call myself the author of the present work. I am but the wisp of straw that ties the fagot together.

But it is not altogether vanity in me either:

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for I have repeatedly, though in vain, urged Mr. Winterblossom to undertake the task. But he said that he had once spent many years and infinite labour in preparing a work of deep erudition for the press. The public was ungrateful, and the work still remains unsold. Printer's ink he would never meddle with again; and then, added he with emphasis, taking me by the arm, "*the printer will be paid, whether the work sells or not.*"

Should, however, the public act with greater indulgence in the present instance, it is my intention, if life and health be preserved to me, to offer a second volume to its notice in the due course of time. One difficulty presents itself. Being a stranger to the island,—during the short time I may be able to bestow upon a visit next summer, I may perhaps overlook many things that ought to be recorded with care. I should therefore feel under obligation to any one who will call my attention to any antiquity,

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tale, or tradition connected with the island;—directing their communication to A. Elder, Esq., author of "*Tales and Legends of the Isle of Wight,*" under cover to his publishers, Messrs. Simpkin, Marshall, and Co., or to Mr. French, bookseller, Newport.

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TALES AND LEGENDS

OF THE

ISLE OF WIGHT.

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

"What is't, a spirit?—Lord, how it looks about!"

TEMPEST.

SOME apology is due to the public for presenting another book about the Isle of Wight to its notice. Its hills, its chines, and its undercliffs, the Needle Rocks, and Alum Bay, its "hanging woods" and "purling streams," and all its other "ineffable beauties," have been again and again described, by pens far more romantic and sentimental

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than mine. Yet still there remains a path as yet untrodden. No one has hitherto attempted to collect into a volume the ancient tales and traditions of the island; that is to say, no one has done the thing. For an attempt certainly was made, not long ago, by a friend of mine, which failed from a very singular accident—so singular, indeed, that an account of it may not be unacceptable to my readers.

Mr. Samuel Rhino, a gentleman of considerable literary acquirements, started from London by the "Rocket" Portsmouth coach, to pay a visit to the Isle of Wight. His intention was to make a complete tour of the island, and while he recruited his health by the sea breezes, to write a journal of his travels as he went along, as is the custom with literary men.

He arrived at Ryde late in the evening, but so great was his desire to visit the wonders of the island, and to search out its legendary tales, that he determined to commence his tour that very evening.

He would take a car to St. Helen's, and

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cross the ferry to the hotel at Bembridge, and then on to Shanklin in the morning. Nothing worth mentioning occurred until he arrived at Bembridge ferry.

As he was walking down to the boat, he was joined by a tall gentleman in black, who walked by his side, without, however, entering into conversation. The tall gentleman bowed to Mr. Rhino to enter the boat first; Mr. Rhino, to show his breeding, bowed to the tall gentleman. The tall gentleman, after making another bow, stepped in and took his seat. Mr. Rhino sat himself by him, and the boat pushed off. For some time he amused himself by admiring the water, and the hills, and the red sky in the west; he then turned to his tall neighbour, just to tell him how beautiful the scene was, and, perhaps, make an observation or two about the weather, when, to his dismay, he saw the seat next to him unoccupied. There was nobody in the boat but himself, and the ferryman tugging at his oar.

"What has become of the tall man that

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got into the boat with me?" asked Mr. Rhino, in great trepidation.

"I don't know," answered the ferryman, with great indifference.

"Who was he?"

"It's only him," answered the waterman.

"Only who?" asked Mr. Rhino, with his hair almost standing on end.

"That's just what nobody knows; but every now and then he comes down of an evening, and takes a seat in the boat: but when he comes to about the middle of the stream, the moment you take your eyes off him he's gone, and without paying his fare, sir. I don't think he is an honest man."

In the morning Mr. Rhino, instead of continuing his tour, packed up his portmanteau and returned to London.

Mr. Rhino having given up all intention of writing his work upon the Isle of Wight, after having first seriously considered the matter, I determined to make a bold attempt to accomplish it myself. On my arrival Portsmouth, I inquired whether there was

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any vessel that traded direct to Bembridge or St. Helen's, (not being a steamer, for I hate steam,) having firmly made up my mind to encounter the most formidable part first. I was informed that there was a large wherry that went every day direct to Bembridge. In this I deposited myself, and a small leather portmanteau.

Among a few ordinary passengers, there was a singular-looking old rusty gentleman, with a walking-stick, having a particularly large horn knob to it. He looked like an antiquary—he was an antiquary. In less than ten minutes' time we were the greatest possible friends. When the Ryde steamer paddled past us, we both looked at it, and we both shook our heads—our minds evidently ran in the same ruts.

When we got close to Bembridge, I observed my new acquaintance looking intently at the booms or beacons that mark the deep water channel into the harbour. He counted them out loud. "One, two, three; one, two, three; one, two, three. Is not that boom

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called the 'Old Anthony boom?'" asked he, of a sailor.

Having been answered in the affirmative, he asked again—"Do you not generally keep a greater distance from that than from the other booms?"

"O yes, we always gives it a wider berth," was the reply.

My curiosity rose to the highest pitch.

"Why?—why do you keep further off from that particular one?" I asked, impatiently.

"Because it is the way to steer into the harbour," was the unsatisfactory answer.

The old gentleman gave a hem, and looked as if he knew all about it; so I asked whether there was any story relating to that boom.

"Yes, there is," said he, "and rather an odd one, which I shall tell you, if you please, after we are safely landed."

The next object that attracted my attention was a tower that stood by the beach.

"What is that building that looks like a church-steeple?" asked I.

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"It was a church-steeple," answered the old gentleman; "and there is a story about that too."

"What is it?" said I.

"I shall have great pleasure in telling you," answered he, with the same cautious proviso, "after we are safely landed; but it's a silly tale, and perhaps after all it is not true."

When we landed we agreed to take a chop together at the hotel, and establish ourselves there for the evening. After dinner, when the old gentleman had provided himself with a glass of hot brandy and water, I reminded him of his promise to tell me about the Old Anthony boom, which he did in the following words.

THE STORY OF OLD ANTHONY.

In the village of Bembridge there once lived a fisherman, who went by the name of "Old Anthony;" what his surname was is not at present remembered, but it is sufficient

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to know that he went by that name to distinguish him from other Anthonys that were younger than himself. During the summer he used to be employed in fishing, and in the winter months he obtained his livelihood by smuggling brandy from the coast of France.

The day after his departure upon one of his smuggling expeditions, it blew a heavy gale of wind, and his wife became alarmed for his safety. Her alarm increased when day after day passed without any tidings of him. In vain she looked out to sea every morning, to try to distinguish his tan sail with a white patch in it, but was as constantly disappointed. All the sails in the offing were either all tan or all white.

However, it so happened, that about the end of a fortnight she was walking along the beach by the entrance of the harbour: it was late in the evening, the sun had long set, but the moon was shining brightly. To her great delight she saw her dear Anthony's boat distinguished by the tan sail with the white patch in it, working up into the har-

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"She ran down to meet him and clasped him as she thought in her arms" Page 1. 6

Van L. Hughes lith. to the Queen

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bour. It was about half ebb, and the tide was running briskly out.

For some time old Anthony's boat stemmed the stream merrily, but at length the wind fell, just where the tide was running the strongest, and the boat began to go astern. Here Anthony dropped his anchor, and landed upon the sand. Mrs. Anthony saw him land as distinctly as she ever saw old Anthony in her life. He looked well and hale, though rather thin, and wore his broad-brimmed hat cocked a little on one side, just as usual.

She ran down to meet him, and clasped him, as she thought, in her arms. But to her horror, instead of finding his dear old body pressing against hers, she felt as if she had leant against a dried stick. She looked up, and saw that the object she had embraced was nothing but a rough pole, with a lobster pot stuck on the top of it. In short, it was only one of the booms that were fixed in the edge of the sand to point out the channel into the harbour. She looked about in vain for her dear old Anthony, and then she

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looked for the boat, but that had also disappeared; and old Anthony and his boat, with the tan sail with a white patch in it, were never seen or heard of more.

THE OLD CHURCH OF ST. HELEN'S.

"Waiter, bring me another glass of brandy and water; and now," continued the old gentleman, "I shall tell the story about the old church-steeple."

The old church of St. Helen's was built so close to the shore, that in the course of time the greater part was undermined and washed away by the sea. The steeple, however, had become so valuable a sea-mark, that it was determined to preserve it, so it was built up with bricks in the inside, and its foundations defended from the sea by additional masonry. It was next directed to be whitewashed to make it more conspicuous, and some men were sent over from Portsmouth for this purpose.

They erected their ladders against the

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tower, and one of them went up to commence operations. Upon looking over the top of the building, he was very much astonished to see a little old-fashioned gentleman in light leather shorts and black worsted stockings, apparently fast asleep there. The white-washer burst out into a loud laugh, and his comrades came up to see what was the matter, and they all joined in laughing at the old gentleman and quizzing him.

"It's a fine day, old gentleman," said one.

The old gentleman, who looked very cross, replied, "Wait, and see what the evening will bring, before you call it a fine day. I remember, when the first stone of this tower was laid, the masons came over from Portsmouth in a boat, and were drowned going back, and so it will be with the last that touched it."

"Why, this tower has been built at least two hundred years," said a mason; "it's quite impossible that you can know anything about it."

"It is very difficult to say," said the old

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man, drily, "what is possible, and what is not possible."

Here the conversation ended, and the whitewashers went on with their work—dab, splash—dab, splash.

At length one of them said he would just take a peep to see how the old gentleman got on. He went up and looked, but found nobody there.

"How did he get down?"

"Nay, how did he get up?" said the other.

It was altogether very odd.

When they had finished their work they got into their boat to return to Portsmouth, but at Portsmouth the boat never arrived. They were all drowned.

In the course of the evening it was arranged that we should visit the principal part of the island together. We were to take a jaunting car in the morning to Newport, and on our way we were to visit Woolverton Wood and the Culver Cliff, about which there was a curious story, which he told me in the following terms.

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THE HERMIT'S CAVE.

On the banks of Brading Harbour is a wood extending to the water. There is nothing particular in its appearance to attract the attention of the Isle of Wight tourist. Should he, however, make inquiries respecting it, he would probably only be informed that it was called Woolverton Wood, and that it belonged to the Lord of the Manor. If his curiosity should even tempt him to take a nearer view of it, he would perceive nothing but a tangled maze of hazel and brambles, with a few tall oaks spreading out their branches above. But if urged on by a genuine antiquarian zeal, and he were prepared to set thorns and swamps at defiance, he would find with surprise, amidst this lonely wilderness, numerous vestiges of former activity and wealth; he would see the rank foxglove nodding its head upon heaps of rubbish, the remains of some building of other days, surrounded by bits of carved stone and broken

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pottery. Walls, indeed, there are none. All the materials fit for the mason have been taken away centuries ago, to build the comparatively modern town of Brading. But the curious antiquary may still trace the line of the streets by long low mounds that contain the only remnants of the walls that once enclosed the busy habitations of man. Here and there, indeed, the foundation stones remain, and one may form a tolerable guess at the size and importance of the building. The earthen rampart and the wet foss proclaim the importance of the place in days long past. But the ground is everywhere so thickly overgrown with copsewood and briars, that it can only be seen in detail, and by an indefatigable and thick-gaitered antiquary. If you ask a neighbouring peasant for its history, all he can tell you is, that he believes that there was a town there formerly, and that the church was on a neighbouring knoll, as skeletons and broken tombstones have been dug up there.

There has always been a certain mystery attached to the place. Some of the old in-

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habitants of the neighbourhood used to shake their heads when the name of Woolverton was mentioned, as much as to say that they knew a great deal more about Woolverton than other people, if they did but choose to tell it. But these are all gone to their place of long rest, and even the very mystery itself is fast dying away.

There was, however, one old man who used to shake his head more than anybody else, who lived to within a few years ago. His heir found at his death, among a heap of old account books, receipts for charming warts and driving away the cramp, a pocket containing memorandums of many of the old traditions relating to this place, out of which the following history of the destruction of Woolverton has been collected.

In the beginning of the reign of Edward the Third, a pedlar, or marchant, as they were then called, made his appearance in the borough of Woolverton. He appeared to be a very old man; he was dressed in a rusty suit of black that had almost worn itself

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brown, and he carried a small pack of merchandize upon his back.

When the marchant opened his parcel, and the neighbours crowded round to examine his stock, (for there were then but few shops in remote parts of the country,) there was some article or other that hit the fancy of almost every one—some little darling of a thing that they had been often longing for. The prices were as reasonable as his goods were pretty, and his stock was soon sold.

It was late when he arrived at Woolverton, and by the time he had disposed of his wares the evening was far advanced. However, instead of seeking a lodging for the night, he took his stick and empty pack and left the town. Where could he be going to so late? Their surprise was increased when he did not take the round to the neighbouring village of Brading, or to Carisbroke, but went in a contrary direction by a path that, with the exception of the manor-house and one or two cottages at Yaverland, led only to the sea. But at Yaverland it was afterwards ascer-

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tained that he never arrived. The mysterious marchant formed the chief talk of the place for some time. At the end of a month, however, he made his appearance again, and smiled and bowed, and sold his wares as cheap as before. From this period he became a frequent visiter at Woolverton, but he always took his departure in the evening, and always walked off in the direction of the Culver's Nass, a high cliff overhanging the sea, far from any human habitation—exactly where he went to nobody knew.

Such was the superstitious fear he inspired, that nobody liked to follow him alone. If he was joined by more than one person he would stop and talk with them, or accompany them part of the road they were going; but if alone, or only in the company of one person, he would trudge off straight in the direction of the Culver.

He had been watched part of the way several times. Some of the observers said that he suddenly disappeared under the shadow of the hill. Others said that they took their eyes off him for a moment, and when they

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looked again where his tall, lank figure was a moment before, there was seen instead the stem of a tree or a thorn-bush. But many suspected that his followers kept at too great a distance to enable them to speak with accuracy.

However, notwithstanding all this, his goods were so pretty and his manners so civil, that he became at length quite a favourite at Woolverton. His little peculiarities (as they now began to be called) were thought nothing of.

Sometimes he would tell people's fortunes, or give hints as to what was going to happen, and he was always right. He could tell by the look of a man's face whether he was in debt, and what was perhaps still more remarkable, he often followed up his observation by putting his long bony fingers into his pocket, and pulling out a purse full of gold nobles, and offering to lend.

It generally happens, that as a man grows old his love of mischief diminishes and his love of gold increases; but with the Hermit of the Culver, as he began to be called, it

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appeared to be just the reverse: for often when the time of repayment came, he would say, "My good friend, I don't want the money, but I have got a spite against farmer so-and-so, he has been speaking ill of me if you will only set fire to his wheat-rick we will say no more about the debt." If they spoke of the risk, he would say, "No one ever got found out, following my directions." And, to be sure, that was nothing more than the truth.

As his wicked propensities became more known, he began to be looked upon with fear and hatred. Still, many had been so accustomed to look to his assistance when they got into a scrape, that they hardly knew how to get on without him.

It generally, somehow or other, happened, that just at the very moment when a person wanted his help they saw him striding along with his pack upon his back.

"Ah, Edgar," said he to a young fisherman, "so Matilda despises you?" The lover started from his reverie. "She likes the spruce knight of Yaverland, with his gold

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chain and his feather in his cap, better than the honest fisherman, with his brawny hands and it's not only that—noble blood and gilt spurs marry not out of their degree." Then lowering his voice to a whisper, he added, "Blighted fame and a broken heart bring beauty to an early grave. I wish you a pleasant morning," added he, taking off his little round fur cap; and bowing low, he strided on with more than usual haste.

Edgar ran after him, and caught him by the arm, and said, "Can you help me?"

"Very likely—very likely," replied the old man, taking off his pack and opening it. "There—there's a piece of blue cloth for you that King Edward might be proud to wear. There's a forester's knife all made of Spanish steel—only try its edge. Or perhaps it's fishing-tackle—fishing-tackle—here they are—large size—number nine—number——"

"I don't want any goods to-day," said Edgar, much annoyed at the old man's stupidity or perverseness. "Can you tell me how I can recover Matilda?"

"Oh, the love affair!" said the Hermit of

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the Culver, shutting up his pack; "I am rather old to give advice in a love affair—rather old."

"Then you won't assist me?" said Edgar, turning away.

"Stop, stop," said the old man, "there is a way to do it, but the knight is a good friend of mine. He bought a gold clasp of me last week, and paid me a good round sum. If I help you now, will you do me a good turn another time?"

"I will promise that. But what shall I do now?"

"Ah! you will be afraid to do it; and now I think I had rather that it was not done."

"Then you won't help me?" said Edgar, turning away.

"Stop, stop, stop," said the old man. "No, I'll stand by my word to you. The manor-house is built of oak, is it not?"

"Yes."

"And dry?"

"Yes."

"And there is a thatched stable built against it. Put a lighted rushlight to the

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thatch, and the knight will have no house to live in. The knight is too proud to take shelter in a poor man's cottage."

"And this is what you advise?" said Edgar.

"Oh, don't follow my advice unless you like it. I had rather you did not; for the knight is a good friend of mine." And so they parted.

Whilst Edgar was balancing in his mind the wickedness of the scheme against the advantages to be gained from it, he was met by friar John, a pious man, who occasionally visited that part of the island. What passed between them does not appear; however, the manor-house was not burned.

Thus the Hermit of the Culver went on doing favours and contriving mischief—sought after, but feared, by every one.

Some time after this he became suddenly more than usually active, calling at the different houses, advising, condoling, and assisting; occasionally giving money without any prospect of return, or, apparently, seeking for anything beyond barren thanks. He

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would doctor the old women, and tell the fortunes or carry love-letters for the young ones. In short, all his malicious propensities appeared to have left him; and he came forth in the new light of an universal benefactor.

But he said that all his endeavours to do good were counteracted by another old man who was then lurking in the neighbourhood. If a cow died or the beer turned sour—if a sow had a litter of dead pigs—or if a lady's newborn babe was not a perfect beauty, and the very image of its papa and mamma, it was all the machinations of the man in the grey cowl. Still nobody saw this malevolent being, although the Hermit of the Culver had accurately described him. He had been searched for everywhere, yet nobody ever met him.

At length some of the folks who thought themselves wiser than other people began to shake their heads, as if they doubted the existence of the man in the grey cowl.

One evening, however, the Hermit of the Culver went round and visited all his prin-

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cipal friends at Woolverton, and told them that he had discovered that the villanous man in the grey cowl was coming to poison the water in the holy well at a certain hour the next day, and cautioned them not to let him escape.

It is necessary, however, before we proceed further, that some account should be given of this well. It was a plentiful spring of the purest water, which rose from the ground in a small basin, about three feet in diameter, without ornament of any sort—in short, it was nothing more than a hole in the ground. But on a little knoll immediately above it stood a rude stone column which had formerly been a cross; but of which the upright piece now alone remained. On this were carved the following rude verses:—

While the oose flows pure and free,
Burg and tune shall happy bee,
The net bee heavy in the sea,
And wheaten seed shall yield plentie.

When sained blood in the burn shall well,
It shall light a flame so hot and snell,

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Shall fire the burg from lock to fell,
Nor sheeling bide its place to tell,
And Culvert's Nass shall ring its knell.

If there has been a mystery in modern days with regard to the ancient town of Woolverton, in the days of the prosperity of that town there was a much greater mystery with regard to the holy well. For that the well was holy no one presumed to doubt, but what saint had blessed it, tradition did not inform them. That its water was endowed with some miraculous power nobody questioned, but exactly what this miraculous quality was had never been precisely ascertained. People afflicted with all manner of diseases had bathed in the water, but it could not be perceived that it affected them in any way, except that some few caught colds They had tried it, also, internally—they had taken it cold, they had taken it hot—they had taken it without sugar, they had taken it with sugar—but all without avail: and no wonder! they did not know the secret of the fountain. Some said that this secret had been written upon the arm-pieces of the

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cross, which had long ago perished; some said it consisted in pronouncing the name of the right saint when they used the water, and of this they were ignorant; neither had they any tradition respecting the erection of the stone column or cross. But in this one thing all were agreed—that the fountain possessed certain wonderful qualities, if people could only find out what they were.

The Hermit of the Culver, we have said, had warned the inhabitants of Woolverton that their mischievous enemy, the old man in the grey cowl, was coming to poison the holy well at a certain hour the next day. Accordingly, considerably before the appointed time, all who had been afflicted with cramps, or pains, or sickness—all whose cows had died, or whose beer had turned sour—all who had been unsuccessful in raising corn or breeding pigs—all fathers and mothers who had had the misfortune to become the parents of ugly children, stood lurking about in groups, ready to wreak their vengeance upon the old man in the grey cowl, the sole author of all these misfortunes.

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They waited half an hour—they waited an hour—they waited an hour and a half—they waited two hours—they waited two hours and a half; and began to get impatient. They looked round for the Hermit of the Culver, but he was gone; though he was standing among them but a moment before. It was odd. They began looking down the different roads to see which way he was gone.

At length they saw the figure of an old man in the distance tottering towards them. He appeared to be in the extremity of old age. He was wrapped in a loose dress of dark grey cloth, tied round his waist by a piece of cord. His countenance was almost concealed by a large cowl of the same dark grey cloth. In his left-hand he held a long staff, nearly as high again as himself, upon which he leaned. In his right-hand he held a bough of a tree, with all its leaves dry and withered. He walked straight towards the well, without appearing to notice the number of people who were watching him.

When he arrived at the well he laid down his staff and his withered branch—he placed

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the palms of his hands together with his fingers pointing upwards, and stood for some time intently looking at the ruined cross and appeared to be muttering something to himself; whether it was a prayer, or whether it was a curse, they could not tell, as he uttered no audible sound. At length he kneeled down and leaned over the well. "He is poisoning the water," said the inhabitants of Woolverton to one another, and some one from the crowd threw a stone which struck him on the head, and he lay senseless on the ground. A whole shower of stones followed, and life appeared to be extinct. Many of the stones had struck him, and his blood was running fast from a deep cut in his forehead —it trickled along the ground, and was falling drop by drop into the water of the well.

When they saw that their victim was dead, they began for the first time to consider whether they were justified in what they had done. Had any one seen him do any harm? Had they any proof that the old man had ever injured any one? While they stood thus alarmed at the success of their own

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plan for destroying a man whom they knew nothing about, friar John made his appearance among them.

"What is this assembly about? is it murder?" said he, as he saw the bleeding corpse of the old man. He then lifted up the grey cowl that he might see his countenance; when, horror-struck, he hid his face with his hands, and remained for some time silent. Then suddenly starting, with an almost supernatural energy he said, with a voice of thunder, "Who has done this? Who has done this? Will no man answer? Know, then, at least, the crime you have committed. This is the holy man himself. A thousand miles would I have walked barefoot to have spoken to him again alive, and must I only see his bleeding, murdered corpse? Who set you on to do this great crime? Will no one answer? Did you do it of your own accord?"

"We were told that he was a sorcerer, and secretly worked us evil!" stammered out Edgar.

"Who told you?—What is his name?—Where does he live?"

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"He is one that visits our town often; but we do not know his name, or where he lives."

"Wretched people!" said the friar: "if you have been prompted to do this by one with an unknown name, and an unknown dwelling, a thousand years of penance and repentance will not wash away your sins. The man whom you have slain was one who prayed for you night and day—who has visited the holy sepulchre, and brought this palm branch from the holy land. He alone knew the secret of the well. Look! look! his blood is dropping into the water. The curse of the well is upon your town."

The body of the holy man was taken up with due solemnity, and laid upon a bier in the chapel, amidst a blaze of wax-lights; for the inhabitants of Woolverton, willing to make what reparation they could to the deceased pilgrim, were profuse in their offers of anything that could give solemnity to his wake and funeral.

But notwithstanding the blaze of light round the holy man's bier, and the satisfac-

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tion, such as it was, that they had done everything that could be done for him under existing circumstances; still the fact, that they had, in the first instance, murdered him, stood broadly prominent in their minds, and made them feel very uneasy in their consciences.

Neither were friar John's assurances at all more consoling. In the first place, he assured them that the curse of the well was upon the town. Indeed, the old rhyme on the cross informed them that

> When sained blood in the burn shall well,
> It shall light a flame so hot and snell,
> Shall fire the burg from lock to fell,
> Nor sheeling bide its place to tell,
> And Culvert's Nass shall ring its knell.

Here it was evident that when the blood of a holy man trickled into the fountain, their town should be burned, and not a single cottage remain to show where it stood. This was all clear enough. Some even construed the prophecy literally, and thought that the drops of blood were to be the actual tinder-

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box that was to set the town on fire. All, however, were agreed upon this one fact, that they stood a very good chance of having their town burned one way or another. And the old manuscript informs us, the greater part of the inhabitants of the burgh, being "resolved to make a contention for their tenements against the prophecy, provided themselves with buckets and tubbes, lest the fire should take them unawares."

But what the meaning of the Culver's Nass (which was a tall projecting cliff overhanging the sea) ringing the knell of the town was, nobody could understand. In short, the learned declared it to be a passage confessedly difficult.

But the curse of the fountain was only one half of their misfortunes; for friar John had assured them, in the second place, that if they were instigated to the murder by a person whose name and whose dwelling was unknown, they would all most assuredly be ——: at any rate, he said, that a thousand years of penance and repentance would not cleanse them from their crime.

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Now, the prospect of losing everything, both in this world and in the next, made all the people very melancholy, and, instead of occupying themselves with their accustomed labours, they remained the greater part of the day collected in different groups, bewailing their evil fate, and consulting with one another how they might avert the curse of the fountain, and discover the name or the actual place of abode of the hermit of the Culver.

The sun went down, and evening was closing in upon their fruitless communings; and they began to meditate carrying their repinings and condolences from the open air to the more comfortable neighbourhood of the fireside; when whom should they see strutting up the centre of the High Street, bobbing, and bowing, and smiling to every one he met, but the hermit of the Culver himself. One would have imagined that common delicacy would have prevented him from showing himself just after he had been the cause of bringing misery and destruction upon all around him. However, the old man

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of the Culver was not possessed of common delicacy; but, on the contrary, he appeared to be actually proud of what he had done. To every old acquaintance he met, he took off his little fur cap, and bowed his long, lean body almost to the ground in a kind of mock obeisance, as much as to say, My dear friend, what do you think of me now? and then he gave a smile—such an unearthly smile! The manuscript of Peter Smith describes it as actually turning inside out the consciences of all who beheld it. Up the street he walked, accosting every one he met in the most familiar manner, to their great horror and perturbation.

"Go," said they one to another, "to friar John; he wanted to know who got us into all this trouble; tell him here is the gentleman himself!"

However, though they all wanted friar John, nobody went for him; but they stood in a manner panic-struck, astounded as it were at the old man's impudence, or perhaps fascinated, as we are told little birds are by the wiles of a serpent.

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They wanted to cut their old acquaintance; but they found, to their dismay, that it is a very difficult thing to cut an acquaintance who is determined not to be cut—an observation, the truth of which has been confirmed by the experience of subsequent generations.

Through the town he walked, bowing and smiling, and cutting his jokes. If no one laughed at them, he laughed more heartily himself; if no one answered him, he answered himself. And when he came to the gate by which he usually left the town, (for the town was to a certain extent fortified,) he turned round, made one of his lowest bows, doffing his little fur cap to the very ground, and out he went.

Meanwhile Edgar, who had been endeavouring to keep up his spirits rather by drinking mead than in condoling with his friends, had just arrived at that point in his cups which the learned in these things call comfortable, when the old man made his appearance. He sat, however, very quietly until the hermit had gone quite up the street,

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and was going out of the town gate, when up he jumped, and said, "If the old gentleman won't tell me his name, at any rate I will find out where he lives;" and after him he went.

He overtook him a short distance from the town.

"A fine evening, sir," said Edgar; but the old man had altogether lost his merry, joking, communicative manner, and only answered, "Hum!"

Edgar was not a man, after two or three warm glasses of mead, to be put down with a "hum;" so he continued—"It's getting late, sir; I suppose now you are walking homeward?"

"I suppose I am," answered the old man, in a very short, dry, testy tone.

"Might I take the liberty to ask just whereabouts your residence is?"

"Better come and see," said the old man, with a very disagreeable smile; "better come and see."

"Happy to accept your kind invitation," replied Edgar, with a civil bow.

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The old man bit his lips. It was evident that he did not want company that evening. However, Edgar did not care whether he did or not, but he thought it would be a good opportunity to make a push for his name. "Sir," said he, "we have been acquainted for some time, and I have never been able exactly to make out how you spell your name?"

"Name!" said the old man, evidently very much disconcerted, and not knowing how to answer—"name!"

"Ay!" said Edgar, coolly, "I presume that you have got such a thing as a name?"

"To be sure—to be sure," said the hermit; "I will give it you in my own handwriting when we get home."

After this they walked on for a long time in silence, for the old man's manner was not encouraging, keeping under the shadow of the down, as, for some reason or other, the old man did not like walking more than he could help in the moonshine. However, when they came near to the sea, they left the shadow,

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and ascended to the higher part of the down.

At length Edgar broke silence, and said, "Pray, sir, as you often walk this way of an evening, do you ever meet with any fairies? Is it true that they dance about in the rings one sees on the downs?"

"To be sure—to be sure they do," said the old man; "they dance, and plant mushrooms!"

While Edgar was turning over in his own mind whether the old man was making a fool of him or not, he observed that they were going down hill. He looked and saw the sea dancing about in the moonlight, hundreds of feet below. In short, the old man was walking straight to the edge of the highest part of the cliff. Here Edgar judged it prudent to let the hermit walk a foot or two in advance. He might, perhaps, give him a poke with his elbow—at any rate he did not like to trust him. They soon had no more turf to walk upon. The road grew steeper, and the loose chalk-stones crumbled

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and rolled about under their feet; and every stone they moved tumbled over the edge into the unseen depth below.

The old man stopped at the very brink of the precipice, and turned round and paused for a few seconds, which gave Edgar just time to look about him, and to recognise the place.

It was near a steep, narrow, sharp promontory that jutted a little into the sea, and overhung it considerably, somewhat resembling, only on a much smaller scale, the promontory of the Needles at the other extremity of the island. It was, in fact, formed of precisely similar materials. Geology informs us that there is a vertical stratum of chalk which runs right across the island like a back-bone. One layer of this chalk, being harder than the rest, remains standing after the others have been washed away, and has thus formed the isolated rocks and promontory of the Needles, and the place of which we are now speaking, which was called the Culver's Nass; indeed it originally gave the name to the whole cliff, Culver, or Colvert, meaning the

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green neck, called so from the narrow strip of down grass that clothed the summit.

The old man turned to the right, and gave the ground a tap with his stick, upon which the earth thereabouts began quivering and shaking; and presently a large oblong opening, much in the shape of a grave, appeared, out of which streamed a blaze of light.

Edgar gave a shudder and shrank back; in fact, he did not like the looks of the old gentleman's house-door. However, the hermit pointed to the opening, and bowed and smiled, as much as to say, "Won't you walk first, sir?"

Edgar thought that it would be very convenient for him to show off a little civility also; so he bowed and smiled, and pointed to the hole, as much as to say, "I could not, indeed, think of stepping in before you."

The hermit of the Culver then, with true politeness, acknowledged Edgar's civility with a bow, and stepped forward; but instead of disappearing at once down the hole, as Edgar expected, he seemed to walk down a very comfortable flight of steps.

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Edgard looked down, and seeing nothing to alarm him in the narrow passage and steps cut out of the chalk, cautiously followed the old gentleman down the stairs; though he certainly did experience a sort of creeping fear as he descended beneath the surface of the earth.

The passage was very narrow for a few yards, when it suddenly grew considerably wider, and a lofty vaulted ceiling arose above their heads. The ceiling and the walls were everywhere covered by the most elaborate carving, not, indeed, in any regular pattern, or agreeing with any known rules of architecture, but forming a maze of fantastic and grotesque forms, extending in wonderful variety as far as the eye could reach. The colouring was even more extraordinary than the sculpture. The substance of the walls appeared to be the chalk of the hill, but, instead of looking white, it was tinted with all the colours of the rainbow; yet it did not appear to have been painted by the hand, but rather resembled the reflection one sees upon a wall by the light shining on it through a

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window of stained glass. The gallery was also brilliantly illuminated, but not by lamps, or by torches, or by candles, or, indeed, by any means that Edgar had seen either before or since. In one place was the carved image of an owl, with light shining from its eyes. In another place there was a dragon with party-coloured wings, and a flame of fire issuing from its mouth. In another place there was the figure of the moon shedding its cold pale beams upon them. Further on, there was a nosegay of flowers, and each flower was a coloured flame. The extent of the gallery could not be seen, from the shape being gently curved. The floor was an inclined plane, here and there crossed by a low step: so that as Edgar and the old man advanced, they were gradually descending deeper into the earth.

"This is all very pretty," thought Edgar to himself, "but I should like to know what there is at the end of it."

At length they came to two lofty folding doors, which opened as they approached, and they entered into a large hall of great height,

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carved and coloured like the gallery, only ten times more beautiful, more grotesque, and extraordinary.

The ceiling was studded with stars winking and twinkling, and some of them, probably intended to represent planets, sailing round amongst the others, as if they wandered about of their own accord without being attached to anything. Serpents, all of fire, were twining and twisting round the columns supporting the roof, some of which were carved to resemble palm trees; others were shaped like gigantic bulrushes: some appeared as if they were covered with fishes' scales, the edges of which glistened with fire: some were spiral: some were covered with masks of the human face, and through the eyes and between the teeth fire shone out: some were covered to resemble ivy and creeping plants, with a green flame glistening on their leaves.

The hall was also adorned with pictures. At the end of it hung a full-length portrait of the hermit of the Culver. It had, however, this peculiarity: there arose out of his forehead two short horns; so small, however, as

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to be hardly remarked. He looked round at his host, but his forehead was as smooth as other people's. Round the sides of the hall Edgar saw, much to his surprise, resemblances of most of his friends at Wolverton, all of them with a black mark, resembling a horse-shoe, on their foreheads. Amongst these he observed a picture, which, from the freshness of the colouring, appeared as if the paint was not yet dry. It also hung a little awry, as if it had been finished and put up in a great hurry.

He could not for some time trace a likeness to anybody; but after a little consideration he concluded that it could be intended for no one but himself. It was, however, remarkable that he was painted in the exact dress he had then on, though it was different from that which he usually wore. He was not a little gratified to observe that there was no black mark on the forehead. His gratification was indeed to some extent subdued by seeing a small pot of black paint, with a brush in it, standing on a stool close by. From this he came to the conclusion, either that his arrival

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had interrupted the artist in putting on the finishing stroke, or that he had not yet quite arrived at the distinction of the horseshoe.

When they entered the doors of the great hall, they were instantly surrounded by a number of little beings, none of them more than four feet high. They were all dressed in queer habiliments, and all of them wore a petticoat that reached below their knees. Such extraordinary creatures were never seen before. All their limbs and features were out of proportion to one another. The legs of some were as long as all the rest of their bodies put together. Others waddled about upon little short stumps that could hardly be called legs. Some had very large heads, some had very small heads, some had very broad heads like the reflection of one's face in the hollow of a spoon one way; others had exceedingly long heads, like the reflection in a spoon the other way. In short, all were more or less deformed and disproportioned.

They all crowded round the old man; they hopped, and jumped, and waddled, exclaiming, "Daddy come home!—Daddy come home!"

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Then they surrounded Edgar, ducking and bowing to him in a very odd manner.

The hermit of the Culver, however, soon put a stop to their buffoonery by saying, in a short testy tone, "Get away, get away." Indeed it was evident that he had never been in a good humour since Edgar proposed spending the evening with him. Off they all scampered: some hopping, some jumping, some running upon all fours like rats; some scrambled up the columns, and peeped out from behind the carvings with their ugly faces.

Edgar put his hands to his sides, and burst out into a loud fit of laughter. The lights burnt dim; he stopped, and they shone bright again. He began to have a sort of an idea that he was getting into a scrape. However, he was of opinion that when a man gets into a difficulty, there is nothing like cool impudence to carry him through; indeed his grandfather was an Irishman. So he turned to the old man and said, "You appear to have a very numerous family; to be sure, they none of them seem to be very tall, nor indeed, if

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the truth must be told, very handsome; but quantity, you know, may make up for quality."

"Hum!" said the old man testily, for he evidently did not relish the compliment.

However, Edgar went on as if he did not care whether the old gentleman was huffy or not. "It's a cold raw evening; don't you ever have such a thing as a fire?"

"Cold!" said the old man, with a very disagreeable smile; "cold! we do not often complain of cold here. Light a fire!" said he to the little ugly fellows that were playing and tumbling about upon the floor; upon which they all jumped up, and scampered down the hall, crying, "Cooky, cooky, cooky, daddy wants a fire."

Upon which a withered old hag made her appearance — so withered, so dirty, and so ragged, that she formed a singular contrast to the splendour of everything around. She had a beard nearly three inches long, not of thick hair like a man's beard, but formed of distinct separate bristles like a cat's whiskers. She did not come, as any Christian would, to

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light a fire, with a coal-scuttle, a fagot, a handful of shavings, and a tallow candle; but in one hand she held a small phial, and with the other she dragged a large broom after her. She walked in a circle three times round a spot in the centre of the hall, muttering something to herself, and then she poured a few drops of the liquor on the pavement. A flame immediately rose up half way to the ceiling, appearing as if it burned of its own accord without any fuel to supply it. The old hag then jumped through the middle of the flame, made a sort of grotesque obeisance, and hobbled off.

The flame burned gradually lower and lower, then suddenly flared up again, and then burnt lower again. But every time it flared up, it rose higher than it did before, and it did not fall down quite so low as the last time. The heat soon became most oppressive, but Edgar was determined not to show any uneasiness.

At length, however, he fancied that he was beginning to be baked brown, and that his skin was becoming stiff, like the crack-

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ling of a roasted pig. It evidently would not do to let things go on so much longer; so he turned to the old man, and said, "Don't you think that the room is getting *rather* warm?"

"Rather warm!" said the old man with a chuckle, "Rather warm! Put out the fire."

"Cooky, cooky, cooky," said the little ugly fellows again. The old hag made her appearance, and squatted down by the flame. She gave one puff with her breath, just as one would blow out a candle, and out went the flame.

Edgar was not a little pleased to see the fire put out so easily. It was also very satisfactory to find that the hermit did every thing he was asked. In short, he began to find himself much more at home than before. So he turned round to the old man and said, "How do you manage to spend your long winter evenings? could not now one of these little fellows give us a song or a little music?"

"Music!" said the old man; "Music! bring music."

"Music! music!" hallooed all the little fellows in the hall.

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Presently in marched two little creatures, really not much above three feet high, carrying between them a small three-legged stool: after them strutted in a fellow, with a peaked nose and beaver hat on his head, looped up with a red stone, that sparkled and glistened like a red-hot coal, with a long cock's feather stuck in it. The little creatures put down the stool in the centre of the hall, and the fellow with the peaked nose stood upon it, and began bowing and ducking, and flourishing away with a roll of paper that he held in his hand. Edgar could not make out this sort of dumb music, and was just turning round to ask for some explanation, when in came a dozen more stools, which were ranged in a row behind the man with the hat and feather. After these strutted in the musicians, who took their seats with a great appearance of self-importance. There was one little wizen fellow with a sort of triangle; but the notes were made by striking pieces of iron of different lengths. Then there was one that played two flageolets, one out of each corner of his mouth.

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Then there was another with a red face and inflated cheeks, that blew a sort of trumpet or French horn, which curled and twisted and curled till there appeared no end of it; then there was one with very long arms, that played upon a clarionet that was at least as long as himself; indeed his arms appeared to have been made for the express purpose of fingering the lower notes. Then there was a sort of instrument, resembling a hurdy-gurdy, but it was so large, that it required two persons to manage it. One turned the handle, and the other played upon it, by pressing down the strings upon a revolving wheel. It is supposed that this is the same instrument that was known to our ancestors under the name of the "Viol de Gamba."

After two or three solitary notes by way of tuning up, they all started off together, and made a glorious noise. The little fellow with the hat and feather flourished his roll of paper, and bowed and twisted about as if he thought he was performing his part with great elegance. The operative musicians fiddled and strummed, and tingled and

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puffed, as if their very lives depended upon the noise they made. What appeared to Edgar somewhat singular was, that they kept themselves in tune, not by drumming with their feet upon the ground as folks generally do, but by bobbing their heads down to their knees, and then throwing them up again with a jerk: that is to say, all except the fellow with the long clarionet, the length of which entirely prevented him from bobbing forward at all; so he was obliged to keep himself in time by working his head sideways. Edgar thought he should have lost his balance altogether once or twice: and so indeed he would, if he had not leaned the end of his clarionet the other way to keep his equilibrium. This tickled Edgar's fancy so, that he could not help again bursting into a fit of laughter. The lights again grew dim, the music stopped, and the players stared at him with open eyes and open mouths, as if they had never heard anybody laugh before.

As soon as his laugh ended, the hall brightened up again, and the music went on more merrily than before. "If you only had a

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few ladies in your establishment," said Edgar to the old man, "we might have a bit of a dance."

"Ladies!" said the old man, "ladies!" and without waiting for further invitation, in tripped about a dozen sylph-like female forms, which, instead of being ugly like the rest, were some of them remarkably beautiful. There was one in particular, in a pea-green dress, whom Edgar thought, for a little person, (they were none of them above four feet high,) was the most charming creature he had ever beheld. To be sure, her petticoats were rather shorter, and their texture rather finer than people at that time generally wore. Still she had such a pretty foot and ankle, and she rolled her eyes about in such a fascinating manner, that Edgar was quite bewildered. So he went up to her, and asked the honour of her hand for a dance. The music stopped—they tuned a bit—and then struck up a dance. Edgar led off with his partner in fine style, and all the other little ladies danced too. The ugly fellows did not presume to interfere, but kept tumbling and kicking about

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at the other end of the hall. Well, they footed and chasséed and turned; the music played louder and louder, and the dancers danced faster and faster. Edgar thought that it was the finest fun he had ever seen, and the pea-green lady looked prettier and prettier.

When the dance ended, and the ladies stopped to take a little breath, the old man edged up to Edgar, and, with the sweetest smile he was master of, "hoped that they should often have the pleasure of his company again;" and whispered that the young lady wished to improve her acquaintance with him—much in the same manner that an experienced chaperon makes up to her daughter's partner, when he happens to be an elder brother of the right sort. Edgar hesitated a little; for whether it was that the fumes of the mead had got into his brain, or whether it was all owing to the fascination of the pea-green lady, all the rest of the world, even Matilda, was forgotten, and he could think of nothing but his partner. What he would have answered, it is difficult to say, if

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he had not been in some measure brought to his senses by an accident that occurred.

One of the little ugly fellows at the end of the hall, in tumbling about, accidentally hit his neighbour in the eye with his left heel, upon which the other flew at him, and scratched his face with his nails. The first immediately put himself in a posture of defence, which was, however, singular enough. He stuck out his hands, which were armed with very long nails, and hunched up his back, and, to Edgar's great horror, his petticoat lifted up behind, and a long black tail made its appearance, which he arched up like a cat when it is attacked by a dog.

The moment his tail made its appearance, out came the old hag that they called Cooky, and gave him such a box on the ear, that it not only knocked him down, but he tumbled over and over, bounding about like a piece of cork.

It immediately occurred to Edgar that he had got into bad company; indeed he soon became convinced that they all had tails, and that the petticoats were only put on for the

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purpose of concealing them. He even thought that he could distinctly trace the outline of a tail through the pea-green petticoat of his beautiful partner. It was a very pretty tail no doubt, but still it was a tail. His thoughts again reverted to his dear Matilda, whom a moment before he had almost forgotten. Then, were the hermit of the Culver and himself the only persons in the room without those appendages?

However, he soon convinced himself, notwithstanding the great care that the old man had taken to conceal it, that he had got a tail even larger than any of the rest. It then suddenly flashed across his mind, that however long a visit the hermit of the Culver paid to his friends at Wolverton, he had never been known to sit down—and no wonder! he was afraid of sitting upon his tail.

Edgar now began to entertain serious thoughts of returning home, but he was afraid there might be some difficulty in accomplishing it; for though his host did everything he was asked while he remained there, he could not help suspecting that there might

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be some difficulty in getting away. After turning the matter over in his mind, he thought it would be best to wait till after supper, as the old gentleman might take it as a positive affront if he went away before; and then he would take his leave as a matter of course. So he asked the old man whether he did not think it was nearly time for supper.

"Supper!" said the old man very civilly, "supper! you shall have it directly."

Presently a little thin fellow, with a white apron and a tall white linen cap, made his appearance, carrying a very thick but short roll of paper in his hand, bobbing and bowing in the same manner that the rest had done. He marched straight up to the raised dais, where the old man and Edgar were established as the post of honour, and after two or three more bows he opened his paper, and holding one end of it in his hand, let it unrol itself along the ground. The paper went on unrolling and unrolling, until it reached an arm-chair that was placed in a r ecess at the upper end of the hall—probably the seat usu-

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ally occupied by the hermit of the Culver. The recess, however, was not straight, but made a sort of a twist as it went back, so that the arm-chair could not be seen from the bottom of the hall. Edgar had asked his pea-green partner the meaning of this, and was informed that it was because the old gentleman did not like people to see what he was thinking about. Rather odd, thought Edgar; but it was evident that he had got into an odd place.

"Here is the bill of fare," said the hermit; "what would you like to take?"

Edgar, however, was no scholar, for the schoolmaster in those days had not yet gone abroad; so he asked what it contained: upon which the little man in the white cap began expatiating upon the numerous dainties from all parts of the globe that he would have the honour of setting before him. Edgar, who was but a plain fisherman, did not understand the meaning of half that he said; so he just observed, that there was nothing that he knew of so good as a broiled bone and a mug of mild ale for supper. The little fel-

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low bobbed, and bowed and bobbed, and retired.

Presently up marched a troop of little animals, all with white linen caps and aprons, one carrying a plate, another a knife, another a saltcellar, another a mustard-pot, and so on. Then came the chief cook himself, carrying the dish with the broiled bone, and after him came a little, fat, red-nosed fellow with the ale, in a vessel made of staves and hoops, like a small bucket. The supper looked extremely nice, and Edgar was just going to fall to, when he remembered that friar John had often told him never to commence any meal without first repeating a Latin grace that he had made him learn by heart. So he stood up; but the moment he began to speak the lights burned dim, and, as he continued, the room grew darker and darker, and when he came to the holy name, the whole company set up a loud shriek. Then followed an awful clap of thunder; the columns rocked, and bent, and twisted, and then the whole building fell with a tremendous crash, and Edgar fell senseless to the ground.

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At length he came to himself again, awaking as it were from a very heavy sleep; his limbs were stiff and numbed with cold. It was broad daylight. He found himself in a small cave half way up a chalk cliff. The sea was below him at a great depth, and the base of the cliff was covered with a heap of loose chalk rocks, that appeared to have newly fallen. All that had passed seemed to him like a dream, nor could he at first make out where he was; for he had no recollection of ever having seen the place before. He soon, however, discovered a path which led along the side of the cliff, and at length he came out through a narrow opening in the rock, that looked almost like a doorway. Here he for the first time knew where he was: it was the spot where the door opened in the rock to admit the old man and himself. The path he had come along was evidently the remains of the gallery through which they had gone to the great hall. The features of the cliff were, however, entirely altered. The curious projecting part which had gone by the name of the Culver's Nass had evidently

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fallen in the night, and its ruins were lying in heaps below. From tracing the line of the gallery along which he came, it became evident to him that the great hall had been in the interior of the Culver's Nass, and that the cave where he found himself in the morning must have been the recess where the arm-chair stood. But what surprised him the most was, that though he could trace exactly where the door by which he entered was—where the steps were, and where the gallery was level—where it was straight, and where it curved—where the arm-chair stood in the recess, and where the step of the dais was—still not a vestige of the beautiful carving remained, nor could he find a single stone that looked as if it had ever been touched with a chisel; but it formed a sort of loose crumbling footpath.

While Edgar was standing looking at the wreck of the Culver's Nass, his head filled with undefined images of deformed imps and beautiful pea-green ladies with tails, he turned his eyes to seaward in a kind of reverie, and was astonished at the sight of a fleet of large

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ships sailing round the neighbouring headland of Dunnose. He rubbed his eyes—he thought that he was still dreaming, for he could hardly persuade himself that all the extraordinary things he had seen and heard had been a reality. Well, he rubbed his eyes; but it seemed to him that the more he rubbed them, the more numerous the ships appeared: for additional vessels kept one by one coming out from behind the high headland. Where were they going to? They were steering along the shore to where Edgar was standing. As they approached, it became evident that they were French—that they were ships of war; and by different flags and pendants, each denoting the rank of the commander, he could see that it was an expedition of some importance.

But the least agreeable part of his observations was, that it was evident they intended to take a look-in at the Isle of Wight. So he made the best of his way back to Wolverton. He felt no doubt but that the intelligence of the French invasion would soon rouse the martial ardour of the Wolver-

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tonians (for the town, as has been before observed, was in some degree fortified); and, if they made a good defence, they might probably hold out until assistance came from Carisbrook and other parts of the island.

However, as ill luck would have it, when the folks crowded round him to hear the news, he thought fit to give a brief account of his adventures in the order in which they happened; and this, trivial as it may appear, decided the fate of the town.

Nothing is more difficult, or is a greater test of true wisdom, than never to say too much. If Edgar had contented himself with telling them that the French fleet were sailing straight for their harbour, it is most probable the gates would have been shut, the ramparts manned, and all their means of defence put in proper order. Wolverton might have remained a flourishing borough to the present day. But he began by informing them that he had spent the evening with the hermit of the Culver in a magnificent hall in the interior of the Culver's Nass; and that just as he was sitting down to supper upon a broiled

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bone, and a mug of mild ale, the whole promontory tumbled down in a clap of thunder, (as it appeared from his way of telling,) just for the purpose of opening for him a view of a French fleet which were coming with twice the numbers they ever came with before.

When he finished, old Giles, who was the oracle of the place, paused for a moment as if in meditation, and then shook his head; upon which there was a general shaking of heads throughout the assembly. Edgar, who justly concluded that this shaking of heads betokened some doubts as to the truth of his story, said that he was afraid that they did not altogether believe what he had said about the cave.

Upon which old Giles replied, with a bow—for he was at all times a very courteous old gentleman—that for himself he could assure him, that he considered one part of his story quite as true as the other. Teddy Whack, the cobbler, shut one eye, and touched the middle of his forehead with his finger. Will, the fisherman, said that it would take a mighty big fish to swallow all that; while the little

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tailor, who had set himself up for a wit, observed, that if he thought he had been at supper in the Culver's Nass, it was evident that he did not know chalk from cheese.

"Won't you take another glass of mead, Master Edgar?" said the blacksmith, with a knowing look.

When Edgar found that, instead of putting the town in a posture of defence, they merely laughed at him, he grew very earnest in his assurances that the French were really coming; but it was provoking to him that the more he assured them that what he said was true, the more they would not believe him.

It was of no use talking; so he thought he would look after his own affairs. He first got his boat hauled up high among the bushes, so as to be out of sight. Then he drove his pig and his fowls into the forest; but not without some difficulty, for the pig tried to go every way but the right one, and seemed to have no more apprehension of being eaten up by the French, than the other

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inhabitants of Wolverton. Then he hid his money and his fishhooks under a stone in the floor, and his pots and pans and other valuables he concealed with equal care. Then he took his bow and his trusty bill, and prepared himself for the worst.

Presently he heard loud shouting in the town—"The French! the French!" Immediately after he saw a numerous party of the enemy pass the lane close to his cottage, which stood by itself a few hundred yards from the walls, hurrying as fast as they could, with a view to take the town by surprise. The inhabitants, however, just closed the gates in time, and the besiegers soon found themselves exposed to a galling fire of crossbows from the ramparts, which they had no power of returning with effect. They retreated back among the bushes after the first two or three discharges of crossbow bolts and arrows. However, it was evident they were rapidly increasing in numbers: for, from the difficulty of landing upon the rocks, only a few could come on shore at a time.

Presently a considerable body was collected,

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and they made a rush for the gate, carrying a heavy beam with them, which they used as a battering-ram. The gates gave way with a crash; the French entered the town. The Wolvertonians began to run away, and all seemed lost, when a loud shout of "A Russel, a Russel!" was heard, and the knight of Yaverland was seen coming to the attack with a reinforcement of some dozen or two men on foot, variously armed: he himself, however, made his appearance in a complete suit of armour, with a plume of white and red feathers in his helmet. As soon as he came up, he couched his lance, and charged gallantly into the thick of the French. But his steed, which was a small rough pony, though tolerably capable of carrying either the knight or his armour separately, stumbled, at a most critical moment, under their united weight. The knight fell prostrate in the mud among the thickest of the French, and was knocked on the head by a battle-axe; but his death was instantly avenged by an arrow from Edgar's bow.

The Wolvertonians took courage and made

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a desperate charge. The French made a hasty retreat, and the battle seemed to have been won, when suddenly the war-cry of the French was heard from the other side of the town. Another detachment of them had rowed up the harbour in their boats, and had effected a landing at Wolverton quay, or the lock as it was then called; for the channel of the river Yar at that time ran close under the walls of the town.

All was instantly confusion in the town: the inhabitants fled on all sides. The borough was given up to pillage; and the Wolvertonians, looking from the surrounding hills, had soon the melancholy sight of the homes of their childhood one by one falling a prey to the flames; and as houses in those days were built almost entirely of wood, they knew that the destruction of their property would be complete.

Presently they were roused by the sound of trumpets, and they saw an army coming over Brading Down, marching under the red cross banner of St. George. They were islanders coming to their assistance under the

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command of Sir Theobald Russel, the brother of the knight of Yaverland, who was at that time warden of the Isle of Wight, and Sir John de Langford, constable of Carisbrook castle. But small consolation did it bring to the Wolvertonians; for though vengeance was a very agreeable thing, still it would not put out the fire.

Well, the fire it burnt, and it blazed, and it crackled; indeed it had it all its own way. The church, however, in which the corpse of the holy pilgrim was lying in state,* was without the walls, and the Wolvertonians hoped that it might yet escape the flames, and that they might be able to solemnise his obsequies with the proper ceremonies. For they all knew full well that when a man happens to get murdered, and his body is not buried with any particular ceremony and attention, he is very apt to be troublesome afterwards: in fact, there is no keeping his ghost quiet—it will keep rambling about at

* There were three churches in Wolverton:—Wolverton, Middleton, and La Wode.—*Vide Sir R. Worsley, Hist. Isle of Wight*, p. 186.

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nights. However, the more they wished the fire to go out, the more the wind blew; and, in spite of all their wishes, the church got burnt with the rest of the place.

The consequence was just what they expected: the gray pilgrim began to walk about at nights: he is even now sometimes to be met with late of an evening in a place called the Pilgrim's Lane. Indeed there are a great many people now alive, who have seen a something there at night that they could not understand.

After the catastrophe above described, a deep curse appeared to rest upon Wolverton. None of the old inhabitants ventured to return to rebuild their houses. Nobody ever, if he could help it, passed near the ruins after nightfall. No one dared to go near them alone, let the emergency be what it would. One man, it is true, in a state of intoxication, went there at midnight, but then he was never heard of afterwards. The road that then passed almost straight from Brading to the village of Bembridge ceased to be travelled, because it passed the ruins of Wol-

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verton, and a road was made up hill and down hill, and round about, to avoid going near this ill-fated spot. If the stranger wishes to know where the old road was, he may still find an isolated piece of lane which is yet known by the name of the Pilgrim's Lane. Close to Wolverton, the hedges that bounded it have been grubbed up; and also where it would have joined the present road to Bembridge; but a little bit remains in the centre, looking just as it did centuries ago.

Whether the inhabitants of this part of the island will continue through all succeeding generations to go miles round, up and down hill, merely to avoid passing by a place that most people have forgotten all about, is more than I can tell; but sure enough it is, that although roads have been frequently planned to go straight from Brading to Bembridge, yet somehow or other they have all fallen to the ground, and folks still continue to go up and down hill and round about. What, however, is still more remarkable than this deserted road, is, that the bed of the little river

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Yar, that forms the deep water channel up the harbour which formerly passed close under the walls of Wolverton, has now entirely altered its course. It comes into the harbour just where it did, but, instead of running by the ruins of the old town, it turns short off, and makes a long round to avoid the place. If the visiter will stand upon the hill, above the haunted wood where the old town was, when the tide is low, he will be able to distinguish accurately where the course of the river formerly ran, and where it now is.

There is a tradition in the neighbourhood that the nightingales never sing in Wolverton wood—they get driven away by the owls.

But, amidst all this scene of desolation, there was one person who sustained no injury either in person or property. This was Edgar; his cottage was a short distance from the town, and was neither sacked by the French, nor burnt with the rest of the buildings. He offered his houseless Matilda a home, which offer was accepted;

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and in the due course of time they were surrounded by a small family of chubby children, some of whose descendants still occupy a cottage on or near the spot where Edgar's formerly stood. Those who wish to see it will find it about a hundred yards from the Pilgrim's Lane.

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THE ANTIQUARY'S GRIEF.

Man has another day to swell the past,
And lead him near to little and his last;
While mighty nature bounds as in her birth,
The sun is in the heaven, and life on earth.

BYRON.

WHEN I rose in the morning, I was told that my new acquaintance had been up and out some time; so I went out to take a look round the place. I soon fell in with him; he was standing by the sea-side, at the end of a newly-planted avenue, which the spirit of modern improvement had introduced there, apparently with a view of converting the little village into a fashionable watering-place.

But such a change had come over him, that he hardly appeared to be the same person: his countenance bore the impress of deep grief. I indeed almost fancied that I

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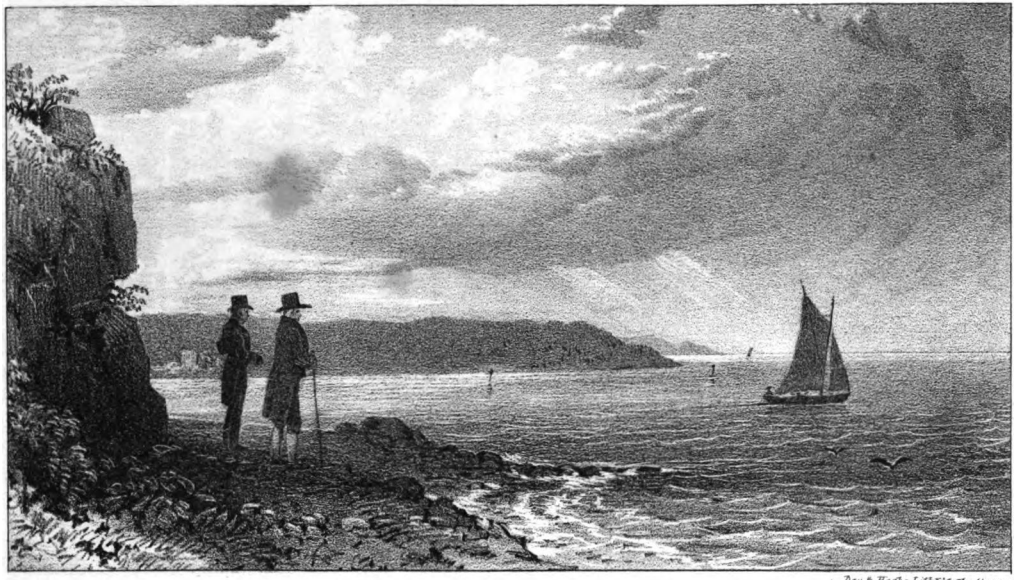

THE ANTIQUARY'S GRIEF.

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saw a tear trickle down his cheek. He did not seem to notice me as I came up, but stood leaning upon his long walking-stick, looking sorrowfully out to the sea.

At length he turned to me and said, "Do you see that little fishing-boat? The spot she is now sailing over was once dry land. There, within my remembrance, stood a cheerful cottage with its thatched roof and little garden, shaded by one or two large elm trees in its hedgerow. It is all in my memory so fresh, that I can still trace every minute feature of the picture in my mind's eye. For although age has dimmed my memory with regard to things of more recent date, every little trifle that interested me in my hours of childhood, remains as vivid as ever in my recollection.

"In the neighbourhood of this spot I was born, and spent the first years of my life. That cottage was tenanted by an humble friend of my poor dear mother's, and there have I spent many of the happiest hours of my life. In the corner of its garden, when I was a little child, I planted an acorn, which

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was cherished for my sake: and I continued to watch its growth for the few years that I remained in the neighbourhood; and now that I am come on a pilgrimage to visit the scenes of my childhood * * * * *

"I expected, I could not but expect, that all who remembered me, all whom I remembered, should have been gathered to their fathers; but that the very scenes of my childhood should have vanished does come with a chill upon me. I had a strong wish to see again (you will think me a foolish, fond old man) the oak tree that I sowed as a child, to watch how the same burden of years, under which I am wasting away and tottering downwards to my grave, was giving it strength, and vigour, and health, to flourish and endure for long long years after my poor carcass had been gathered to its worms. You perhaps smile at my being so dejected because I can no longer find the toys of my infancy; but when one is touched at the sight or loss of inanimate objects, it is from the ideas that we associate with them, and not for themselves, that we are affected.

* * * * *

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" As one descends into the vale of years, the heart grows more cold and callous to what passes around it. I have seen friends and relations drop one by one around me, and seldom a tear has fallen; but let my thoughts go back to the days of my childhood, and rest on the doating kindness of a mother, or let but a stranger even pronounce her name, and I can sit and cry like a child.

" In a mother's love there is no wavering, no changeableness, no jealousies. How many, at the end of a long life, will say with me, there is no love so constant and so true as a mother's love! Our very imperfections and errors but endear us to her the more. But it's seldom, it's very seldom, that we fully appreciate that love before the grave has placed its gulf between us. To me there is a kind of melancholy pleasure in looking back to the sunny spots of the long long past, and thinking of things that have been and never can be more. There is something in the solemn train of thoughts that arise, that hallow and purify the mind. I like to dwell upon the past: the past cannot change,

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while the future is full of blighted hopes and broken friendships.

"Fool that I was, to expect that the scenes of my childhood would have remained. The earth is a scene of continual change: the spot where we now stand was at one time a deep sea, at another time it was land again, and then a fresh water lake; again the ocean, with its salt-water tribes, regained possession; again, here a high beach of shingles fought for ascendance, inch by inch, against the rolling waves; and then the land rose slowly and gradually above the level of the surrounding water, and became a residence for mushroom man. Fashion and folly, and the love of money, now reign where long ago fishes swam.

"But look you how the sea is gradually, and almost unmarked by man, again taking possession of its ancient property. Every year some narrow strips of the fine land that raises wheat for the squire's or the labourer's table are washed down and carried off by the tide, to fat the worm and feed the shrimps for the larger fishes.

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"But there is another thing, much more wonderful, relating to the Isle of Wight, which is, that the whole island is gradually, though slowly and imperceptibly, sinking bodily again beneath the waves."

"Indeed!" said I, all amazement, "I never heard that before. I suppose it is a fact not very generally known."

"Probably not," he replied; "the life of man is too short to perceive the changes that gradually take place in the world that he inhabits. As the May-fly, whose existence is limited to a few hours, may perch upon the flower of the water-lily, and imagine its duration to be eternal, because the insect in its little life can trace no change in the beautiful island it has alighted on—so man is scarcely able to appreciate the alteration of a few inches in the elevafion of land that takes place in many centuries. We have, however, sufficient evidence of alterations having taken place, in times comparatively recent, in the Isle of Wight.

"This island was known to the Romans under the name of Vectis, and was by them

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described as a peninsula. The isthmus is supposed to have been just beyond Cowes, and to have joined the mainland at a place called Leap. The water across there is still shallower than the rest of the Solent sea; and what is very singular, there is still a lane in the island that goes down to the sea there, and looks as if it wanted to go across, and had been cut off abruptly by the waters.

"When we arrived here yesterday evening, you must have observed the large salt-water lake that now goes by the name of Bembridge harbour. That was once fertile meadows, and contained, as tradition tells us, many lordly groves of oaks. Modern speculators, however, tried to drive back the sea, and restore the land to the dominion of man. For a time they succeeded, and the corn waved and the cattle grazed in the new meadows. They sought for a spring of fresh water for their cattle, and they found a well, cased with wrought stones, somewhere about what is now the centre of the harbour; relating to which there is a singular story, apparently of great antiquity.

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"There is one thing," said I, "I wish to observe ——"

"Ah! I understand you," said he, interrupting me, "you mean it's past breakfast time;" and without allowing me to follow up my geological inquiries, he walked me back to breakfast.

After we had finished our breakfast, I asked Mr. Winterblossom (for such I had ascertained to be his name) for the story about Bembridge harbour, and the well cased with stone. He told me that it was in writing, and that he would show it me after we arrived at Newport, when we probably should have a little more leisure. He valued it more, he said, than anything of the sort he possessed; and he had been at great pains to translate it from a very old British manuscript, which would have been unintelligible to the ordinary reader. "At present," he continued, "we have a long day's

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work before us. We have first to visit Wolverton wood and the Culver cliff; then I will show you Yaverland, Sandown, and Shanklin, and then we will get on to Newport."

We then ordered a car, and bade adieu to Bembridge. Wolverton wood and the Culver cliff have been sufficiently described in the foregoing tale, and do not need further notice. We next passed Yaverland, where my friend made me examine the curious old Saxon porch of the little church: he told me that there was another similar to it in the inside. This very small church had evidently once been the private chapel of the adjoining manor-house, which is a very respectable building of the date of Henry VII., built, however, upon the foundations of a house of much older date. Mr. Winterblossom, however, was not aware whether any part of the original building was still in existence.

We next passed Sandown, where there is a fort built by Henry VIII. It is still kept in repair, and is occupied by a governor and a

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very reduced peace establishment. We were informed by a person we met on the road that the governor's flag was only hoisted on a Sunday, and not then unless the weather happened to be fine—with a view to the economy of bunting.

Our course next led us through the little pretty village of Lake. It contains several rural ornamental cottages, covered with different kinds of creeping plants: and it probably affords a most delightful retreat for summer visiters who are fond of romance and insects. At length we got to Shanklin, and put up our car at Williams's hotel, and strolled down to the Chine, as the little glen is called. Upon our arrival there, the old gentleman was furious at finding all access to it shut out by a locked gate. Upon inquiring the way in, we were informed that if we went round by the sea-side we could get in through the garden of a cottage, the inmates of which would provide us with a guide.

"I understand," said my friend crossly; "just to make us pay so much a head for seeing it, and have an abominable boy who

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won't tell you anything worth hearing, and won't hold his tongue, tacked to one's elbow all the way."

"Is there any history, or tradition, or tale, relating to Shanklin Chine?" asked I, after allowing him a reasonable time to digest his anger.

"No, sir. What! to make a puppet-show of it, and exhibit it at sixpence a head? No, sir. I know no story, or tradition, or tale, relating to it."

As we passed through the cottage garden, a woman came out and attached herself to us as a guide, without at all consulting our wishes upon the subject. But as there was no help for it, I tried, by questioning, to get information of some sort from her; but all she could tell me was, that the waterfall was much handsomer a year or two ago, when they used to dam the water back, and then let it go when visiters were ready. But they were obliged to give this up, as the visiters who came immediately after the grand splash used to go away discontented, as if they had not had their money's worth. Shanklin

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Chine is, however, a pretty little glen, particularly to a person who has never been in a highland country.

We now started again, and in due course of time arrived at Newport, where our day's journey was to end. A ragged fellow, who called himself a porter, took our cloaks and luggage into the house; and Mr. Winterblossom, having given the necessary directions about beds and dinner, proposed a walk to Carisbrook while it was getting ready. We had not got half way up the street before my friend missed his memorandum book, which he never stirred without. It had been been left in his portmanteau—he would just go up stairs and get it.

He came down stairs again with a face of horror—his portmanteau was not there. Who had seen his portmanteau last? Nobody in the house had seen it. Was it left in the car?

It was not in the car. Ragged Jack took the luggage out of the car.

Ragged Jack was sent for, and soon found.

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"He did not mind whether there was a leather portmanteau or not, but he took it all into the house." But, as we could both swear that the missing goods were in the vehicle when we got out, circumstantial evidence was strongly against Ragged Jack. Mr. Winterblossom sent for a constable, with a view to have him taken before a magistrate. The constable soon made his appearance; and the antiquary, Ragged Jack, and myself, were by him, in a short space of time, ushered into the presence of an Isle of Wight magistrate. He was an ordinary looking country squire, full of the importance of his magisterial dignity.

"Prisoner!" said the magistrate.

"Sir!" said ragged Jack.

"What is your name?"

"I have not got any name in particular, sir."

"But what do people call you?"

"Some people calls me Ragged Jack; some calls me Dirty Will; some calls me Old Sandy. I arn't at all particular, sir."

"Where do you live?"

"I don't live anywhere in particular, sir."

"Where do you sleep?"

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"I very seldom gets any sleep at all, sir."

"Where do you work?"

"Oh, sir, I never does any work in particular, sir."

"Then how do you get anything to eat?"

"I very seldom gets anything to eat at all, sir."

"Then how do you live?"

"Why, every now and then a gentleman like yourself gives me something to drink," said Ragged Jack, pulling the forelock of his red hair, as if he had been touching his hat, and then impudently holding out his hand, as if he expected a donation.

This action appeared to operate a total change in the temper of the magistrate, who asked in an angry tone, "Prisoner, what have you to say why you should not be committed for stealing this gentleman's portmanteau?"

"Why, sir, nobody has said nothing again me yet," said Ragged Jack, coolly twirling his hat round all the while, with his finger through a hole in the rim.

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The antiquary then came forward, and began to state his case, when he was interrupted by a boy running in, and whispering in his ear, "Have you got two leather portmanteaus, sir?"

"No, only one, a very old one, with a brass padlock."

"Then it's all right, sir," said the boy; "the portmanteau was found lying in the arm-chair, under your honour's cloak,"—where, in fact, it had been originally deposited.

Upon hearing this explanation, the magistrate, drawing himself up with dignity, or what he considered as such, said, "Prisoner, you are discharged."

Ragged Jack, however, remained motionless at the end of the table.

"You may retire."

Still no movement on the part of Ragged Jack.

"What are you staying here for? you have no farther business," said the magistrate, sharply.

"I hope you will remember poor Jack,"

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said our ragged friend bowing, with a smile, or rather a leer, upon his countenance.

"Remember you! why, what claim have you upon me?"

"Loss of time, sir," said Jack. I might have earned two or three shillings for carrying pockmanties while I have been standing here chatting with your honour. And then, sir, there is my loss of character. Folks lose in character very much by being brought here before your honour. Sir, my character has prevented me from being sent to jail before now, as your honour's clerk, Mr. Scrubbins, can testify."

Scrubbins rubbed his spectacles, and laughed.

"Is that the fact, Scrubbins?" asked the magistrate.

"Exactly, sir," answered the clerk; "he was brought before a magistrate on suspicion of assisting in the landing of smuggled spirits, but produced evidence to show that his character was such that no one would trust him with tubs.

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Jack grinned and blew his nose in his fingers with perfect self-complacency. The magistrate then left the room, and walked up the High Street. We amused ourselves with watching Ragged Jack sticking close to his elbow all the way up the street, till at length the magistrate yielded, and purchased his emancipation by putting a sixpence into Jack's hands, who now returned in triumph whistling down the street, with his hands in his smallclothes pockets.

"There is some humour in that fellow," said the antiquary; "we will engage him when we want a guide or a messenger."

"But he will pick your pocket," said I.

"I suppose he will, if we put much within his reach. But if we only trust him with less than the value of his wages, it will be his interest to be honest. The world, my dear friend, is governed by self-interest; except, to be sure, a few romantic, high-flown imaginations; but it strikes me that Ragged Jack is not one of these."

Ragged Jack was hailed, and informed that we should probably want his services to-

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morrow; Jack grinned assent, and pulled the brim of his hat.

After dinner the antiquary suggested that, as we were both great pedestrians, we should walk the next day to the other celebrated chine, "Black Gang;" and that Ragged Jack should carry our dinner with him, and we should pick-nick it in some snug little nook overhanging the sea.

Shortly after daybreak on the morrow, the antiquary, Ragged Jack, and myself, sallied forth—Jack carrying the materials for the dinner, and acting as guide. Upon our arrival at the scene of action we searched out a snug little terrace near the top of the hill, overlooking the sea, where we left Jack to boil our potatoes in a little tin apparatus, called a conjuror, which had been lent us by our landlord; and to fill our jug with some cool spring-water, to qualify the contents of our bottle of brandy.

"We'll make a day of it," said the old gentleman, "for, old as I am, I love the romance of dining on a lonely mountain's side, with the deep ocean rolling its eternal

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waves upon the beach beneath. No appearance of a locked gate here, however," said the antiquary, looking along the bleak and mouldering side of the hill with evident satisfaction.

"Come to see Black Gang Chine, sir?" squeaked a little voice close at his elbow.

"We don't want any guide," said my friend to the ragged boy by his side.

"Mind where you put your foot, sir, it's very slippy," said the little cicerone, not heeding his dismissal. "Put your foot here, sir; mind, it's very slippy."

Presently we came to a building looking like a very small chapel. The little boy ran in and filled a tumbler of water from a fountain within the building. He offered it to me first; but not being fond of drinking cold water in the morning, I only sipped—but oh! instead of the limpid stream that I expected, it tasted to me as if it had been compounded of alum, ink, and bilge-water. I had just, however, sufficient presence of mind to hold my peace, and see what Mr. Winterblossom would say. He took a good

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gulp, and oh! how he coughed and spluttered, and abused the ragged urchin that administered it!

The little boy, keeping well out of reach of his formidable cane, assured him that it was a celebrated medicinal spring, discovered by Dr. Waterworth, of Newport. The old gentleman hobbled down the path in great dudgeon, the water was abominable, and the discovery new, both of which rubbed him against the grain.

We had not, however, descended many yards before we heard, just above, similar sounds of coughing and spluttering, and a voice, "Nasty, is not it, Sally?" We turned round, both of us highly delighted at another victim having fallen into the trap. We saw a short, pursy, red-cheeked, important looking gentleman, in a bright yellow waistcoat, with coloured glass buttons glittering in the sun. His coat appeared to be in its newest gloss, as likewise his white hat, green under the brim; he carried also a mackintosh cloak on his arm. His wife, and daughter in her teens, apparently both in their Sunday best,

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attended him. We allowed them to overtake us.

"A fine morning," said my friend the antiquary.

"Beautiful!" answered the citizen; "for my part, I delight in this kind of rural scenery. Ryde, sir, in my opinion, is little better than the Royal Exchange removed."

"Take care, sir—you will get wet, sir," said the little boy to the citizen, who was dabbling through a puddle of water, apparently without any necessity.

"I can't get wet," said the citizen, looking up at us with a triumphant air; and then looking down at his calloshes, he said, "*Indy rubber.*"

"Very comfortable, no doubt," said the antiquary.

"Ah, sir, my life was saved by Indy rubber only last week. I was caught out in a thunder-storm, and if I had been wet through I dare say I should have died. Do you know what this cloak is made of?—Indy rubber. Did you ever feel a hat so light as this?—water-proof too. Do you know what it is made with?—Indy rubber."

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I got bored with his conversation, and was looking about at the scenery, when my attention was recalled to our new acquaintance by my hearing the words, "Holland flying through the air to Germany."

"What!" said I.

"Indy rubber," said the little fat man.

He is mad, thought I, and the fit is coming on him; when he, seeing my astonishment, explained—"I mean, sir, that if the balloon had not been made air-tight by Indy rubber, it would never have held the gas till they got to Germany."

"Ah! I understand," said I; "you mean the Royal Vauxhall Nassau monster balloon."

"Law, pa! here is a dandelion," cried the young lady.

I thought his solemnity would not have stooped to such a trifle, but I was mistaken. He walked up to it with great gravity and picked it, and pointing to the white juice issuing from the stalk, asked if we knew what it was.

"A sort of vegetable milk," said I.

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"It's only the sap," said the antiquary.

"Indy rubber," said the citizen—"Indy rubber, just as good as ever was extracted from the Ficus Indicus. My cousin Robert Snooks is growing five acres of dandelions for the Caoutchouc Company."

We soon arrived at Black Gang Chine, which corresponds well to its gloomy name. The land on each side of the glen, standing four hundred feet above the neighbouring ocean, is composed of a dark and almost black clay, with layers of yellow sandstone cutting across it at different heights. But from the whole surface continually crumbling away, the two sides of the chine appeared like huge heaps of black earth supported by courses of stone, which look almost as if they had been placed there for that purpose. Not a tree or a shrub, scarcely a tuft of grass, was growing there. A little rill of red irony looking water runs along the bottom of the glen, till it comes nearly to the sea, and then falls in a narrow thread of water about seventy feet perpendicular into a dismal hollow of dark mouldering clay. The echo

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of the waves, as they fall upon the shore, sounds like a roaring of the elements in the interior of the earth, rising up from the bottom of the cave.

Here I observed our worthy antiquary chuckling with delight, as if there was something in his mind that pleased him. I smell a story, thought I. "Pray, sir, is there any tradition connected with this singular spot?"

"There is a curious legend relating to it," replied he; "but I am hungry, and I suppose that by this time our potatoes are boiled. Holloa! there is Ragged Jack fast asleep, lying his full length upon the ground. And there," said my friend, "are the eatables all unpapered, which I particularly cautioned him not to finger."

As we approached, we observed two little boys running away. We gave Jack a kick, to which he replied with a grunt, without, however, attempting to rise. An empty bottle lay by his side, and a smell of brandy explained the mystery. He had got to the brandy bottle, and was dead drunk.

"Never mind," said my friend, "we will

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dine upon cold meat and cold water: a man may fare worse."

And fare worse indeed we did. The boys we had seen running away had perceived our cook's situation, and stolen all our eatables.

"At least," said my friend, observing a jug of clear cold water, "I'll have a drink of this."

Splutter, splutter, splutter, went the antiquary in the extremity of his rage and vexation. For the malicious little imps, to make their joke complete, had filled our jug with the above-mentioned water of abomination.

"We must just walk back to Newport," said I.

"Just so," he replied.

"There is a beautiful new hotel at the top of the hill, the Black Gang Chine Hotel," said the boy.

"I hate *new* hotels," replied my friend, as cross as an old wife on washing-day.

"Don't you think," said I, when he had got a little into good humour again, "that you rather overstated the case yesterday,

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when you said, that mankind were governed solely, or at any rate chiefly, by self-interest? It appears to me that the prime agents in human actions are our passions, our immediate feelings, whether good or ill, without any, or only a distant reference, to their consequences. If people were only governed by self-interest, who would ever pick a pocket and get hung for it? Who would ever get drunk like our beastly follower, Ragged Jack? Who, in short, would ever do a wicked or a profligate action?"

The old gentleman, however, was either tired, or hungry, or cross at having his favourite theory questioned, and made no reply.

In the course of time we got home. A good dinner and a hot glass of brandy and water restored him to excellent humour.

"Now for the legend," said he; and, after a little rummaging in his portmanteau, he produced the following.

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A LEGEND OF BLACK GANG CHYNE.

The dwellers in Wight they once did wail,
When they lived in dread of the giant of Chale.
The giant of Chale was mighty and big;
And he loved man's flesh better than pig.
He chose those that were tall and heavy,
And stew'd the fat ones in their own gravy.
The children he tied with bonds of wire,
And broiled them alive on a charcoal fire.
He dyed his hands with man's blood red;
He laughed and shook his sides, and said,
"I care not for saint in his lonely cell—
I care not for book, and I care not for bell—
I care not for heaven, I care not for hell—
I live upon man's flesh, and fat me well."

The saint was praying on his knee
For those that are dead, and those that be;
And as he raised his voice in prayer,
He heard the curses fly through the air.
The holy man was struck with dread,
And every hair stood up on his head.
For he knew the time was a fated hour,
When the spirits of earth and sea have power,

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And that which is holy quakes and quails,
For the time of the spirit of sin prevails.
The fiendish laughter thrilled through his bones;
And he answered the sound of mirth with groans.
He hailed the voice as it came on the wind,
"What is thy title, what is thy kind?
Who is it scoffs at saint and cell?
Who cares not for book, and cares not for bell?
Who cares not for heaven, and cares not for hell?
But lives upon man's flesh and fats him well?"

The burly giant rose from his lair
When he heard the questions ring through the air.
Then he poured a goblet filled with blood,
And he dipped his hands in the gory flood;
He made a sign with his bloody hand,
And drew the figure in the sand.
"I'll make his spirit quake and quail
That questioneth the ogre of Chale.
I dare him to meet me at midnight dread,
When the horned moon is over our head;
For then the lower spirits and upper,
And those of the earth, I've asked to supper;
Then the imps that ride on the desolate wind
Shall chant him in thunder my title and kind."

There was heard, when the blood of the sign had dried,
A whizzing sound on every side;

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It sang in the Culver's goblin cave—
It sang at the Needles and over the wave—
It sang on Hecla's frozen strand—
It sang on the desert's burning sand—
It sang the mountains and clouds aboon—
And the whizzing sound went up to the moon.
The sound went down to the ocean's deep,
And the kelpies were roused from their evening sleep.
And though the night was clear and still,
The wind seemed to whistle round Katherine's hill;
But the sound came not in the chapel fair,
Because the sign of the cross was there.
The bloody sign was a sign of might
To every being that shuns the light;
Whether made by sprite or child of clay,
The bloody signal they must obey.

The holy man was struck with fear
When the words of the giant rang in his ear;
For the giant was mighty in wizard power,
And Hallowe'en was a dreadful hour.
But the fearfullest time was the midnight dread,
When the horned moon is over one's head.
The saint had been dared to come that night,
Or acknowledge his fear of the giant sprite.
He took him a staff of the mountain ash,
His pilgrim scrip and calabash;

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Nor spirit did he hold in scorn
Distilled from the barley-corn,
(For he had grown infirm and old,)
To keep himself from catching cold.
At midnight he left his lonely cell
To seek the giant's flowery dell.
In a lovely vale, all down by the sea,
Was the cave of the giant's cruelty.
The valley side was blooming fair,
For every flower blossomed there;
The violet and primrose gay,
And cowslip tall, adorned the way;
Nodded to him the blue harebell,
And smiled the yellow daffodil;
The heath its little eye did twinkle,
And stared the humble periwinkle,
Snapdragon opened its yellow mouth,
Sunflower turned his face from the south—
The blown rose smiled in matron pride
At the little rosebuds round by her side,
Besprinkled with dewdrops all around,
Like a diamond necklace down to the ground;
The foxglove showed its sunburnt face,
And bent and bowed with vulgar grace,
Fluttered a leaf to the moonbeam wan,
Just as a lady flutters her fan;
And every daisy on the hill,
With its yellow face and clean white frill,
Seemed each to giggle and shake its head
As though, if it could, it would have said,

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'Twas a comical time and a comical place
To look the giant of Chale in the face.
But though the bank was blooming fair
The robin redbreast dwelt not there;
For the robin was a friend of man,
And would not eat from an ogre's hand.
Though all things seemed to laugh and jeer,
They could not put the saint in fear;
For he had dared both death and chains,
And a noble spirit ran in his veins.

Sudden there crashed a clap of thunder,
Which filled the saint with awe and wonder;
And just before his footpath way
A cavern yawned in the mountain clay.
The cavern it was not paved with stones,
But strewed around with dead men's bones.
On a throne of skulls the giant sat,
And his lamps were fed with dead men's fat.
The sea was studded with goblin sails,
And snakes and adders danced on their tails.
The bats fly high, the bats fly low;
The owlets hoot, and the ravens crow;
The dragons they rattle their scaly wings;
The scorpions show their poison stings.
For the spirits appeared in every shape—
One took the form of a long-legged ape,
And one was like a large black cat;
And one like a boar, and one like a rat;
One grinned in the form of a dusky bear,
Another was like a spotted hare;

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Another was like a bloated toad,
That spat his venom on the road.
They laughed, and they grinned, and they jeered to see
The saint come to join their revelry.
The owlet he hooted his laugh in the air,
And in laughter growled the dusky bear.
'Twas a horrible thing to hear and see
These beasts, how they mimicked humanity.

On a table, in lieu of a loaf of bread,
Was a bodiless but living head;
Its sightless eyeballs it rolled about,
And its bloodless tongue it lolled out.
The giant has called for his favourite dish
Of reptiles alive, and loathsome fish.
The soup it was brought in earthenware pails—
The mermen who carried them hopped on their tails;
The leeches crept in and the leeches crept out,
The blind worms and lizzards wriggled about.
As the demons raised their cups on high,
There arose a shout, a yell, a cry—
"Here's a curse on the living, a curse on the dead!
But here's a health to the head—the head.
Old man, there's a fire of charcoal and peat:
Do you wish to be roasted? or will you eat?
Here's a boiling lake—you stand on the brink—
Do you wish to be stewed down? or will you drink?"

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The saint he was filled with such dismay,
He could not speak, and he could not pray.
The carrion vulture was over his head,
And under his feet were the bones of the dead;
And human skeletons round were lain,
And one of them turned, as it were, in pain.
But when the sign of the cross he made,
His courage came; he spoke, and said—
"I bless the living, I bless the dead;
A curse upon thee! and I curse the head.
I curse the hill, and I curse the strand—
I curse the ground whereon I stand.
Nor flowers nor fruit this earth shall bear;
But all shall be dark, and waste, and bare!
Nor shall the ground give footing dry
To beasts that walk, or birds that fly;
But a poisonous stream shall run to the sea,
Bitter to taste, and bloody to see;
And the earth it shall crumble and crumble away,
And crumble on till the judgment day."

He spoke, and a mist came over his eye—
He saw not the land, and he saw not the sky.
But when the mist had rolled away,
The earth looked black, and the rocks looked gray;
At his feet there flowed a blood-stained rill,
And bleak and lonely stood the hill.

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"Pray Mr. Winterblossom," said I, "do you consider this legend to be an undoubted antique?"

"All I know about it," replied he, "is, that the copy of it that was given to me twenty years ago was written upon a very dirty piece of paper, and certainly in an old-fashioned character. There appears to me also to be a certain quaintness about it that smacks of age. But whether it is really as old as the time of Walter de Langstrell, the hermit of St. Katherine's, or not, I have not the means of informing you."

"Oh," said I, "then there was certainly a hermit of St. Katherine."

"Most undoubtedly. This Walter de Langstrell appears to have lived in the reign of Edward II. But whether he got drunk upon whisky, and fancied that he went to court at the devil's levee, at this distance of time it is impossible to ascertain. It is very probably a mere monkish tale."

Upon coming forth the next morning, the first person that met our eye was Ragged

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Jack, who stood waiting for us, looking as self-satisfied and as much at his ease as ever.

"Sir," said he, "I brought home the basket and that ere cooking concern last night."

"Are you not ashamed of showing your face to us, after your abominable conduct to us yesterday?"

"Now really, sir," said Ragged Jack, with a most insinuating smile, "indeed, sir, that was not my fault."

"What! not your fault to get beastly drunk, and let all the victuals be stolen, and the jug be filled from the well of abomination?"

"I don't know nothing about the well of abomination, sir: but this is just how it happened. I wanted a little spirit to trim the lamp with. I just opened a bottle to look for it—I smelt brandy, and oh, your honour!"—here another sweet smile—"when I smells brandy, it's all over with me. I'll tell you how it is. We have all of us got our weak points, though some of us pretend not

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to know it; and it's just the love of good liquor that is my weak point. Lord, sir! if it had not been for this, I should wear as good a coat as you do. I'd have ridden in my coach before now."

"How's that?" said I.

"Why you see, sir,—consider, in the first place, a person of my abilities; and then I ayn't bothered with no modesty, and I have not got any conscience poking itself in my way at every corner. I once had fifty pounds in my pocket all at one go."

"Where did you get that from?" said Mr. Winterblossom.

"It's just no use asking, sir," said Jack, rubbing his snub nose upward with the palm of his hand, and looking wonderfully knowing; "there ayn't no more to be got that way."

"Well, and what became of it?"

"Why, sir, within two hours afterwards I was as drunk as an alderman, and then I had my pocket picked of the whole of it. Only think, sir, of a gentleman of

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my personal appearance having his pocket picked. I hope, sir, you'll forgive poor Jack—it was just the smell of the brandy that did it."

The antiquary, instead of giving an answer, turned short round to me and said, "If you will now come up stairs, I will give you the story of 'The Stone-cased Well,' with a few notes of my own, which I trust you will not find unworthy of your notice. The story is as follows."

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THE STORY OF

THE STONE-CASED WELL:

OR

A TALE OF THE DRUIDS.

Macb. What is't you do?
All. A deed without a name.

Macbeth.

THE Isle of Wight was first peopled by the Cimri: after these came the men of Galedin in naked ships (boats without sails) into the land of Guitt,* when their country was

* Guitt, or Guict, is the ancient British name for the Isle of Wight; it signifies separation: alluding to the fact of its having been before joined to the mainland. In the time of the Romans it was only an island at high water; when the tide was low, men passed over dry-footed.—*See Whittaker's History of Manchester.*

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drowned,* and had lands assigned them by the race of Cimri.

These two nations came in peace, and lived together in friendship. They tilled their land in security, and warred only against the wolf and the boar. Their venerable Druids governed them by their wisdom and eloquence. These knew the history of dark antiquity. They contemplated the stars of the heavens, and they could foretell what should come to pass in future times. But they wrapped up their mighty knowledge in dark sayings and in symbols, lest the vulgar should profane their traditions. They taught the people to worship the gods; to do no evil; and to exercise fortitude. Or, as the original British runs —"Tri chynnorion doethineb: ufuddhâd i ddeddfau Duw; ymgais a llês dyn; a dioddef yn lew pob digwydd bywyd."† The third race

* Strabo, lvii., speaks of the removal and of the dispersion of the Cimbri in consequence of an inundation. This tradition was preserved by the Cimbri of the Chersonese. But the event must have happened when they dwelt in a low country.

† In case the above translation should not make the subject sufficiently clear to the reader, I have subjoined a copy

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of men that came to the land of Guitt were the Coranied who came from the land of Pools.* These men were giants in stature, and they despised other men, and delighted in war and blood. They came not in peace, but they seized their lands by the strong arm. They chose for themselves the fertile meadows on the eastern side of the island; there they fed their herds.

The Cimri and the men of Galedin beheld them with fear, and humbled themselves before their power.

Thus the Coranied ruled over the island; but their college of Druids ruled over them. And Coll, the son of Cyllin, the son of Caradawc, was the Arch-druid, and presided over the sacred groves. He was seven cubits in height, (for the Coranied despised men of

of the triad, that has happily been preserved in the Greek language.—*Editor.*

Σεβειν θεους,
Και μηδεν κακον δραν,
Και ανδρειαν ασκειν.—Diog. Laertius.

* Probably Holland, where the Celtic tribes were numerous before they were driven out by the Goths.

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small stature,) and around his neck he wore, hung to a golden chain, the sacred serpent's egg, the wonderful talisman of the Druids. His ancestor, Brân,* the father of Caradawc, in the sultry plains of Asia heard the hissing of a multitude of serpents; he rode up to them, for he was mounted upon a swift steed. He knew his danger. As he approached, he saw them twisted and knotted together in a huge living mass: with the breath of their hissings they threw up a small body into the air, and when it fell they raised it again.

The learned Brân knew it to be the wondrous serpent's egg,—so rarely to be found —so perilous to him who seeks it; yet was it of inestimable value, conferring wisdom, and power, and dignity. He dismounted from his horse, and caught it in the skirt of his white robe, for in a white sheet alone can it be taken. The serpents pursued with fury, and with the venomous tooth. He leaped upon his horse. Surefooted is thy steed before the spur. Thou with the head of Olgen,†

* The interpretation of Brân is omen or token.

† Olgen, Olqwen, or Olwen, is the Venus of the Britons.

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save thyself by speedy flight! Brân is thy name, thou with the fair locks!

The horse careers along the dry plain in the midst of a cloud of dust and sand. The serpents hiss in the rear; the noise of their hissing is heard afar. The horse pants with fatigue and heat: his pursuers appear to have the wings of dragons, so swiftly do they follow. O for the scantiest rill of water! for the running stream they dare not pass. At length he nears the water, but the serpents hiss around him. Shall he be possessed of his treasure, or shall he end his life in torment? The horse staggers under his exertion. Hope seems lost. He rolls headlong down the rugged bank; but the water received him. Thus the treasure was gained.

He had it enchased in gold, and threw it in a river. It floated, and swam against the stream; and so he knew it was good: for this is the test whereby the virtue of the serpent's egg is proved. This is the account that the Druids give of the obtaining of the serpent's egg.

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The Coranied held three places sacred in the land of Guitt. The first was the western extremity of the island, where the pale cliffs totter high over the ocean, and the giant rocks rear themselves like towers from the waves. In the midst of these, rising tall and thin from the water, stood the sacred stone of Ur.*

The second was on Mottestone hill, where stood the pillar of a rock, and near it the wonderful Logan stone, which swung from its foundation to the summer breeze; but the strength of many men could not move it from its place.

The hand of a child might sway it to and fro, but it was said that if a man had guilt upon his soul, though his arm might be like an arm of iron, yet would the rock remain firm like the hill on which it stood.

The third sacred place was the grove of oaks in the Hexel ground of Yar.† Here dwelt the Arch-druid Coll, the son of Cyllin, with the other Druids of the race of Coranied.

* Supposed to be the Needle Rock, which fell some years ago.

† Where Brading Haven now is.

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Here was their most sacred grove of oaks, and once in every year they built a tall pile of dry wood, on the top of which it was said that they bound a living man, confining him in a vessel of wicker-work, and they sacrificed him with fire.

After a time there came three strangers to the land of Wight. They were dressed in mean apparel: they were neither merchants, nor hunters, nor warriors; neither did they wear the sacred robes of Druids. But they lived upon the charity of those who offered them hospitality; they ate their scanty meal in thankfulness, and blessed those that gave to them.

The men of the race of Cimri received them with kindness, for the hearts of the persecuted are ever kind. But the wisdom of the three strangers was greater than the wisdom of the Druids. They knew all traditions of the olden time; they could chant the triads, and read the sprigs of the trees;* they knew the history of other countries; they knew the ancient prophecies; and they taught that

* The symbols by which the Druids communicated their h oughts to one another, as we do by writing.

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many prophecies which seemed clothed in darkness had come to the fulness of their time. They taught how one had died for the sins of the world; that the blood of goats and of oxen, sacrificed from the days of old, were but the types of him that the world waited for. They were Christians. Many of the Cimri listened to them; but the Druids of the Cimri held aloof, because they feared to lose their authority with the people.

The Druids of the Cimri sacrificed a white bull at the pillar of Mottestone; and they sang a hymn, to Hu Gadarn, (the Supreme Being,) and they played on their harps—

"Hu Gadarn,* the sovereign and protector;
The smallest in the world's judgment;
The greatest, and Lord over us,
And the God of our ministry;
Light his course and swift.
The lucid sunbeam is his car,
And he is great on land and sea,
Greater than the worlds."†

* Literally, the mighty inspector.

† See O. Dick. v. Mymryn. This hymn is nearly the same as one that may be found in the writings of the Bard Rhys Brydad.

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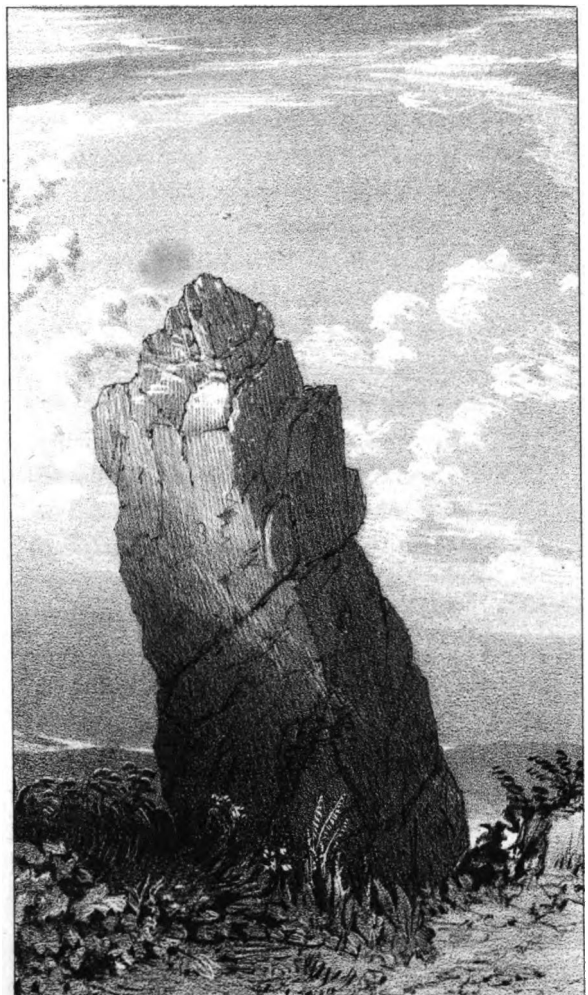

THE PILLAR OF MOTTE STONE.

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J. & Taylor Lith. 17 Red Lion Court.

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And when they had finished, one of the three baptized,* spoke to the people, and explained the meaning of the words; and told them how "the greatest and Lord over us, and greater than the worlds, had humbled himself to be the smallest in the world's judgment: and the people listened to him; but Gowron, the chief of the Druids of the Cimri, replied not, but called to the people to touch the Logan Stone; and one after another they touched the stone, and it moved backwards and forwards as they touched it. The Druids stood behind the stone, and called them each by name as they approached. But when the three baptized strangers touched the stone, it moved not, but stood firm as the hill. Then those who were unfriendly to the three strangers shouted, and looked for stones to throw at them; but the eldest of the three turned round, and said that the trial was not a fair one, because the Druids stood by the stone. The people shouted again for the Druids to go back, and they retired unwillingly: then one

* The name by which the early Christians were known among the ancient Britons.

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of the strangers went behind, and pulled a stone wedge from under the rocking stone, and showed the people how the wedge prevented the Logan Stone from moving. Now those that were friends of the strangers shouted, in their turn, that the Druids had used deceit. The other party now shouted, and began to throw stones, and a great tumult arose, and much noise. And some of the race of Coranied heard the shouting, and they thought that the Cimri revolted, and a party of the giant race attacked the Cimri and the men of Galedin, and killed some of them with their spears. The rest ran away; but one of the strangers, Merddin, the son of Madawc Morvyn, was missing, and he was not found among the slain.

The Druids of the Coranied held a day of sacred mysteries on the sixth day of the moon, in that month of the year when the nights are longest; for they venerate the night rather than the day, because darkness was more ancient

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than light, and because the lot of their race was cast towards the setting sun.

The learning of the Druids of Britain was reverenced to the easternmost end of the earth, and strangers came to learn their mysteries. And in the morning of the sixth day of the dark moon, the Arch-druid, the Druids, the Owids,* and Bards, attended by a great number of the dwellers in Guitt, both of the race of Coranied and Cimri, and many strangers from distant countries, walked in a long procession to cut the mistletoe from the oak.† They stood in a large circle round the tree, and two Owids held a ladder against it. The Arch-druid then, in his white robes of ceremony, ascended the oak tree, armed with a golden knife, and he touched the mistletoe with the

* The Owids were an inferior order of Druids.

† I have spent many a weary day in trying to find the mistletoe growing upon an oak tree, but without success; nor can I learn from books or living men that any one except the Druids ever heard of the mistletoe of the oak. And though I have the highest regard for the Druids, particularly as they were genuine antiquaries, I strongly suspect that they first placed the mistletoe where they desired to find it.

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knife, whilst the other Druids caught it below in a broad white cloth. For if the mistletoe be allowed to touch the ground, or if it be not caught in a white cloth, it loses its virtue. Whilst the Arch-druid ascended the tree, the Owids and Bards played upon their harps and chanted hymns to the name of Hesus. Then they returned to the circle of oaks, where the annual sacrifice was to be held, and all the people who attended carried chains in their hands, in token of their subjection to the sacred Druids: and at one end of the circle there was a large trunk of an oak tree which grew in the ground, but all its boughs had been lopt off by the axe. But two of its largest limbs, which had been lopt off by the axe, were fixed by cords to the top of the trunk; and they stood out one on each side, like the extended arms of a man; and a Druidess sat on the left side of it, crowned with a diadem of wheat-straw with the full ear, and in her right hand she held the horn of a wild bull. The outside of the horn was covered with plates of gold, and the inside of it was filled with the grains

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of wheat.* The trunk of the oak was called Belin; and the woman was called Hex. On the right of the trunk of oak, there sat a Druid with a long white beard; round his head he wore a wreath of withered oak leaves, and round his waist he wore a girdle, in which were twisted the leaves of Salago; his right foot was covered with a sandal of deer's hide, but his left foot was bare. In his hand he held a knife.

And the Arch-druid, the Druids, the Bards, and the Owids, sat upon the stools, according to their rank, on the right hand side and on the left, and they played upon harps, and they chanted a hymn; but the people who stood around the circle understood not the words, on account of the multitude of voices and the noise of the harps. The hymn that they sung was

THE HYMN OF THE HORN.

Pendred was hunting alone in the forest
The boar and the stag with the branching horn;
The black clouds gathered around the sky;

* Probably this horn of the Druids was the original cornucopia.

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The red meteors flickered, and lightning flashed;
The solid earth trembled under his feet.
Goblin hounds and horses swept by,
And riders armed, on the stormy blast,
The welkin rang to their halloo and horn.
Pendred's spirit trembled with fear,
But he asked the riders who they might be.
They answered, "The friends of Arthur the Great:"
Then passed by a black dog, vomiting flames.
Pendred he sank on the ground with awe.
A giant warrior stood before him.
"I am he whom thou callest for aid;
Arise, O Pendred, arise! arise!
Arise and receive this hunting horn,
When a blast is blown on this hunting horn.
Nor ghost nor goblin shall cross your sight:
And goblin thunder cease to sound."
Honour to Pendred's wonderful horn,
That holds the wheat of the mystery.

Then came into the circle of oak trees two Owids of great stature and strength, and they led between them a pale bull, with strong ropes twisted round his horns; and by the power of their arms they led him before the trunk of the oak. And the Arch-druid arose and met them there; and he took the golden horn out

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of the hands of the woman, and the knife from the hand of the man, and he lifted them up high in his hands, and cried aloud,

"The gift in the golden horn;
The golden horn in the hand;
The hand on the knife;
The knife on the leader of the herd;
Sincerely do I worship thee, Beli, giver of good,
And Manhogan the king;
Who preserves the honours of Bel,
The island of Beli."

Then he took the golden horn, and poured the grains of wheat that were in it upon the head of the bull. Next he killed the bull with the sacred knife; and two of the Owids held an earthenware vessel to collect the blood, and they carried the vessel round among the people. A Druid followed them, and he continued dipping his hands in the blood, and sprinkling it upon those that stood around.

And another Druid followed him bearing the mistletoe, and upon those among them that were sick, or weak in body or mind, he crushed a sprig of the mistletoe, saying, "If the Great Spirit is merciful to you, you will regain your strength."

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After the Druids had sprinkled the blood and carried round the mistletoe, the people went away to their homes; except those who had been initiated into the sacred mysteries. These set themselves on benches round within the circle of oak trees. And some of the Cimri, and some of the men of Galedin, and some travellers from the countries of the east, were among them: and two of the baptized strangers, Merddin Emrys and Taliesin, were there.

The Druids of the Coranied were surprised to perceive the baptized strangers there, for they considered them as their enemies, because they diminished the authority of the Druids over the people. However, they looked as if they observed them not.

It was the custom of the Druids, when strangers attended their mysteries, to try their knowledge with questions.

One of the most ancient of the Druids entered, and stood in the centre of the circle, by the poplar tree that grew in the midst. On his head he wore a tall pointed cap, at the top

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of which was fixed a cluster of acorns; he was clothed in a long white robe, upon which were inscribed a great variety of devices; his girdle of leather was also embroidered with various figures. In his hands he carried a bundle of the sprigs of various trees and shrubs; and he walked round the circle with them, looking at the countenances of those who sat round: he then stood again in the middle, and spoke:

"The points of the counterfeited trees,
What is it they whisper so forcibly?
Or what various breathings
Are in their trunks?
These are read by the sages,
Who are versed in science."

When he had finished, he took a few sprigs and tied them together, and gave them to one of the travellers from the far east; and the traveller received them with respect, and walked into the centre of the circle, and after he had examined the sprigs he said,

"The top of the oak, the bitter sprig of the ash,
And the sweet brakewood, declare—a broken laugh.
The cheek will not conceal the anguish of the heart."

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Then the Druid said to him, " Enter into the company of the sages;" and the traveller seated himself by the side of the youngest Owid. Then the Druid presented a bunch of sprigs to another. And the second, when he had examined the sprigs, said,

" The top of hazels—privet of equal length,
Tied up with oak leaves, declare—
Happy is he who sees whom he loves."

And the Druid, as before, bade him enter into the company of the sages, and he took his seat by the last.

Then the Druid turned to the baptized strangers, and gave a bunch of sprigs to Taliesin; and when Taliesin had read them as the others had done, the Druid bade him, as he had bidden the others, enter into the company of the sages. And Taliesin set himself down by the side of Clarsioir, chief of the Bards of the Coranied.

Then the Arch-druid and the Druids rose in anger, and then questioning him, said, " Who art thou, O stranger! that presumest to leave the bench of the novices, and to sit

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among the learned of the Druids and the chiefest of the Bards? Do you compare your learning with the learning of the ancient Druids, or your melody upon the harp, or your song with Clarsioir, the chief of the Bards of the Coranied? How is it that you wear neither the white robe of a Druid, nor carry the harp of a Bard? Neither have you shown us the knowledge you possess!"

Then Taliesin arose and said,

"I am Taliesin,
Chief of the bards of the West:
I know every sprig
In the cave of the Arch-diviner,
I know the intent of the trees,
In the memorial of compacts;
I know good and evil;
I know which was decreed;
Praise or disgrace, by the intention
Of the memorial of the trees of the sages.
I understand my institute.*
I know the mysteries of the Cimri;
I know the secrets of the Coranied;

* All this means that he knew how to read and write according to the mystic form of the Druids, which was by using sprigs of trees for letters or symbols.

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I know the traditions of ancient times;
Question me, and I will reply."

The Druids sat down again in silence, for the fame of his song had come from afar.

Then arose Clarsioir, chief of the Bards of the Coranied, and said, "Taliesin, I know thee well: for heaven seems to have shed upon thy song the clearness and the beauty of the Pleiades."

And after the company had sat for a few minutes in silence, the Arch-druid arose and addressed the Druid who held the bundle of the sprigs of trees,* saying, "Who art thou, ancient of days, that comest amongst us, clothed in mysterious raiment? Whence comest thou? Speak, that we may know thee."

He that bore the sprigs answered,

"My name is Gwydd.
Mâth† had mysteriously marked me

* A considerable part of the mysteries of the Druids, and indeed of the other ancients, consisted in a rude kind of acting.

† Mâth signifies Nature. It is probably the same word with Meth of the Egyptians, and Μητις of the Orphic Bards, with whom, no doubt, the reader is well acquainted. In the ancient Phrygian dialect, Má. *See Sir Wm. Jones's Works*, 4to. vol. i. p. 125.

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Before I became immortal.
I was in a multitude of shapes
Before I assumed a consistent form ;
At last I became Gwydd ;*
I was mysteriously traced by the great sages
In the tower of the mixed race,†
Out of the multitude of arts
Of the teachers, children of Mâth.
When the removal took place,
I was marked by the chief
Whilst he was half parched with fire.‡
I was marked by the sage
Of sages in the primitive world :
At which time I had a being.
Truly I was in the bark
With Dylan, son of the sea ; §
When the floods came
Like the rushing of the hostile spears.
The sprigs uttered their voice
From the frame of distant sounds ;
The pillars of stone with mysterious marks

* Gwydd signifies trees, or a sage.

† The tower of Tintagel, (i. e. Babel.)

‡ Belin, Bel, Baal ; i. e. Nimrod is supposed to have been destroyed by fire, but his followers and worshippers believed that he ascended to heaven in a fiery chariot. *See Nimrod. London*, 1827.

§ Evidently Noah.

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Proclaimed the wisdom of ancient days;*
The knowledge of the stars, and the arts,
And history preserved in song:
The secret that Mengou the son of Teirgweald
Taught to Uthyr Pendragon,†
And the mystery of Rhudlum Gawr
Which he learned of Eiddie, the son of Frewi."

When he had spoken this, he retired.

Then entered into the circle two aged men, leading between them a goat, and round the neck of the goat was hung a necklace of acorns; and they brought him to the poplar tree in the centre.

The goat was met by three Druids, one

* The wisdom of the antediluvians is supposed to have been preserved by being inscribed upon small pillars of stone. This tradition is not peculiar to the Druids, but is met with in the traditions or mythology of other nations.

† Uthyr Pendragon *(a portent the head of a serpent)* was the *spirit* of Ham, who was worshipped in the East under the name of Jupiter Ammon. King Arthur, i. e. *Nimrod*, the mighty hunter before the Lord. The presumptuous Belus was said to have been engendered by sorcery in the tower of Tintagel (i. e. Babel) by Uther Pendragon. He was, however, in fact, as the scripture informs us, the son of Cush. *See Nimrod*, vol. i. *London*, 1828. *Also Cambrian Biog.* p. 17. *London*, 1803. *Also De Regno Britorum*, p. 43. *Helmstadt*, 1573.

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carrying salt, another carrying a vessel of water; the third carried a sacred knife.

The first Druid threw salt upon the head of the goat between his two horns; the second poured water over him; the third slew him with the sacred knife.

The Druid held up the knife dripping with the blood of the goat, and said,

"Spirits of the men of ancient days,
That dwelt long time upon the earth:
When the world was young,
And man was powerful:
Who sowed acorns and reaped oaks;
Who were learned in all wisdom;
Who formed the iron out of stone,
And the brass from the furnace;
Who framed the harp and its music,
And sung the songs of heaven,
Before the power of their bodies,
And the fire of their wisdom,
Were quenched in the waters.
Spirits of the mighty past!
Be above us, and round us, and with us.

And while he chanted these verses, the bards played upon their harps.

Then a silence ensued.

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At length Clarsioir, chief of the Bards of the Coranied, arose. His face was flushed, and his actions wild, as though a spirit of power was upon him. He spread forth his arms, and clutched his hands, as if he were grasping the empty air. His eyeballs rolled upwards, until the organs of sight were hidden by the eyelids.

The words of Clarsioir.

"I hear the rushiug of mighty wings,
Their shadows darken the earth,
The wings of spirits of the ancient men:
Their white beards cover their breasts,
And reach down unto their knees;
Their feet are motionless as they float in air.*

* The observation of the Bard, that their feet are motionless, shows his knowledge of Ghostology. It is an important fact, and one that cannot be too generally known, that ghosts or spirits can always be discovered by observing their feet; for however accurately they may be able to imitate the form they bore when alive, or perhaps in some instances that of other people; having nô weight for their legs to carry, it is extremely difficult for them to walk like living persons. In general they are described as gliding, that is, passing along without moving their legs; and when they do move, then they appear to do it in a very slovenly manner. Thus the devil is always described as trying to hide his

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I see thee, Idris Gaur,* in giant-form,
Thy belt is studded with golden stars,
Thy sword is like to a misty comet.
Gwyddon Ganhebon,† with thy silver harp;

legs. But this is not, as is generally believed, on account of his having a club-foot, or cloven hoofs, but simply because he cannot imitate the walking of a living body.

* Idris, or Edris, is well known to the Arabians; they regard him as the prophet Enoch, and say that he was a Sabean, the first that wrote with a pen, after Enos, the son of Seth.—*See Orient. Coll.* vol. ii. p. 112.

The Eastern Christians tell us that Idris was the same with Hermes, or Mercury, the Trismegistus of the Egyptians.—*See Vallancey's Prospect. V. Dres.* Grecian mythology gives a similar name to Atlas. Among the Druids he was considered as a great astrologer; and such was his knowledge of the stars, and of their nature and situation, that he could foretell whatever might be desired to be known to the day of doom.—*See Collection of Welsh Triads, taken from the book of Caradoc of Nantgarvan, and from the book of Jeven Brechva. By Thomas Jones of Tregoren.* 1601.

In North Wales there is a high pointed mountain called Cader Idris, the chair, or keep of Idris; on the very summit there is an excavation in the rock, resembling a couch, in which whoever spends the night will be found in the morning either dead, raving mad, or endued with supernatural genius.

† Gwyddon Ganhebon, the first man in the world who composed poetry.—*Jevan Brechva.*

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Plennydd, Goron, and Alawn,*
I see thee all. But one I know not;
No light shines on his features,
His form is shrouded in a darker shadow.—
It is the spirit of the restless wanderer.
An unearthly shriek rings through my ears!
They break! they dissolve in air!
A black and heavy mist rolls above me,
Like the smoke from the sooty furnace."

He ceased—he tottered—he fell down. Life seems fled, he lies so motionless. The Bards strike their harps—they seek to revive him by the sounds he loved so well. His breathing returns, but his body is weak and exhausted: they carry him out, and lay him on a bed.

The Bards strike up a strain of solemn music; slow and melancholy were the sounds that came from their harps. Fear was marked upon the features of those that sat around. Their eyes are turned towards the inner opening of the circle.

There entered through the opening two Druids, bearing between them upon two poles

* Plennyd Goron and Alaun, the first bards. The names signify light, energy, and harmony.—*Jevan Brechva.*

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a wooden chest, and they trod in solemn measure to the sound of harps. They rested the chest upon the ground, and the youngest of the Druids approached, and opened a door in front of the chest, and forth issued twelve serpents; and the Bards ceased not playing upon their harps. Then one of the ancient Druids stood in the centre, and chanted in slow time:

"Mysterious beings* creeping on the earth,
Without legs and without pinions moving
In indirect course along the ground.
Are the souls of the ancient great within you?
Do their spirits animate your forms?
Or are you merely creatures of the clay?
And though you have no power of speech,
If the spirit of wisdom guide you,
Make us a sign."

And those that sat around repeated,
"Make us a sign."
"By figures drawn on the dusty earth
With your quivering tail
Make us a sign.
Or if an enemy be among us,
With your poison tooth
Mark him to death."

* The Druids believed in the transmigration of souls.

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But the serpents made no signs, they marked no enemy; but they glided quietly between the trees, and were lost in the shadow of the wood.

The Arch-druid rose from his seat, and passed through an opening between the trees. The other Druids follow according to their rank. They walk in slow procession; a row of lofty oaks is on their right hand, and on their left. Their crooked boughs meet overhead, and darken the passage. But three of the oldest Druids had first placed themselves, one at the first tree, one at the second tree, and one at the third tree.

Each carried in his hand a bundle of the straws of wheat with the full ear, and a hazel wand. And by the first Druid, and by the third Druid, there stood a man with a naked sword. Each Druid had a sign, and none that knew not the sign might pass; and if any one passed the first Druid, and knew not the sign of the others, he was stabbed with the swords, lest the entrance to the great mystery should be discovered by those whom the Druids had not called.

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The first Druid asked each man as he passed, whether the sacrifice had been sufficient; and when he answered NO, he gave him a wheat-straw with the full ear.

The second Druid asked for a sign; and each man, as he passed, placed the forefinger of his right hand upon his lips; then the Druid gave him a wheat-straw, and he passed on.

The third Druid also asked for a sign; and each man, as he walked by, passed his finger across his throat; and the third Druid gave him a wheat-straw.

At length came one of the travellers from the far East; and the first Druid asked him whether the sacrifice was complete; and the traveller replied that he trusted that it was so. Then the Druid broke the wheat-straw in two and threw it on the ground, and presented the traveller with a hazel rod, which, with the Druids, is the symbol of rejection, and thus addressed the traveller:—"Presumptuous stranger, that darest to pry unasked into the secret of secrets; lonely be thy footsteps on the grassy down; and soli-

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tary thy path in the flowery meadow. All that dwell in Gwitt shall shun you like a spotted plague. Fly, lest starvation overtake you. Had you passed but one step further, ere now your last breath had been sighed; for the cold iron would have pierced your soul." *

The rest passed in slow procession between the row of dark oak trees. At the end of the row of oak trees, another circle was seen. It was lighted by the red flames of three burning fires of dry wood; for the sun had gone down, and the shadows of night covered the earth.

In the midst there arose a huge pile of wood, and at the top of it there was a large vessel of wickerwork, likened in shape to a ship; and a straight pole of the alder-tree stood in the midst, like a mast. The wicker-vessel, as the fire-light shone upon it, seemed occasionally to move, as though it contained a living animal.

* When the Druids excommunicated a person, none dared approach him, or hold any commerce with him.

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Before the pile there stood a man, a giant in stature. He carried no staff in his hand, and he wore no clothing upon his limbs; but his naked body was smeared with red paint, from the roots of the hair upon his head down to the soles of his feet upon the ground. His eyes looked down upon the earth, and his fore-finger was pressed upon his lips.

And the Arch-druid addressed him and said, "Who art thou, that comest among us in guise unlike the sons of men? Speak, that we may know thee."

The man answered, "I am Prydwen, the messenger

Of the Son of Uthur Pendragon.*

Through rain and through snow,

Through earth and through fire,

From the island of Morgwena

I have come to thee."

The Arch-druid said, "When does He come?"

The red man answered, "He hovers round thee in the night,

* King Arthur.

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He rides upon the storm,
But in power he comes not yet.
Let me do my bidding."
The Arch-druid said, "What does he ask?"
The man answered, "A gift."
The Arch-druid asked, "What gift?"
The man answered, "A sacrifice; neither a bird, nor a beast, nor a fish."
The Arch-druid asked, "What sacrifice?"
The man answered, "The black plague and the spotted plague
Are around, seeking for entrance:
Famine, and flood, and fire.
Give one, lest I take many."
The Arch-druid answered, "We give."

Then the whole company rose and stood in silence, with their fore-fingers pressed upon their lips, in token of secrecy.

Then the man painted with red paint retired.

There entered next into the circle three men. The first man wore a robe of white, and he carried in his hand a vessel of gold; the second was clothed in black, and he carried in his hand a vessel of iron; the third was

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clothed in gray, and he carried in his hand a vessel of brass. And after these entered again the man painted with red paint; but in his right hand he now carried a naked sword, and in his left hand a burning torch.

The three stood in a row before the pile of wood in the centre. The red man stood behind them.

Then the Arch-druid said, "Follow!" And the three first followed him in the order in which they entered; but the man smeared with red paint moved not from his place.

The Arch-druid walked to the first fire, and he took the vessel of gold from the man clothed in white, and said, "The invisible power made that which was good."

He then poured the contents of the vessel upon the fire; and the fire burnt up in a bright red flame, like the colour of the setting of the sun when the days are longest.

He then walked to the second fire, and took the vessel of iron from the man in the robe of black, and he said, "The invisible power made that which was evil."

And he poured the contents of the iron

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vessel upon the fire, and there arose from the fire a thick cloud of black smoke.

He then walked to the third fire, and he took the vessel of brass out of the hands of the man clothed in gray, and he said, "The invisible power made man—a mixture of good and evil."

And he poured the contents of the vessel of brass upon the fire, and there flashed up from the fire a flame of blue.

He then stood in the centre before the pile of wood by the stone-cased well, and said, "But the spirits of the deep * walk through the clefts of the rocks."

The stone-cased well was sacred in the eyes of the Druids, and they called it "the water of Annown." †

Then the three that had followed the Arch-druid filled each a vessel with the water from the stone-cased well, and they walked each silently and slowly to a fire. The harps played not, neither did the Druids chant.

* Spirits of the deep; in the original British, Plant Annwn.

† The same with the water of the Styx.

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They poured the water upon the three fires The fires hissed like the hissing of serpents, and a cloud of smoke arose.

This they repeated three times; and the third time the fires were quenched.

After this, all who sat around rose, and each lit a torch from the fire of the torch in the hands of the man smeared with red paint.

And they stood round the pile of wood, and by the well, each bearing his torch; and they watched the movements of the Arch-druid.

The words of the Arch-druid:

" The moon rides silent in the heavens;
And shed the seven stars of Arthur
Their trembling light upon the earth,
But round them floats a murky vapour,
Which twists, and rolls, and curdles there.
Spirits ride upon the empty air.
Hark! the howl of a famished wolf—
Omen of evil; —and the owl is hooting;
But though the wolf moan, and the owl cry,
The mystery must come to its end.
Give unto me an attentive ear.
Let your lips be closed in silence,
Let your tongue utter no sound.
Ponder in your hearts these awful words:—

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Out of destruction cometh safety;
Out of death cometh life;
By MAN man is saved!
Let the light of our fire shine
Like the beams of the radiant one *
On the oaks of Gabhanodurum." †

As they stood around the pile, they, following the motions of the Arch-druid, raised their torches on high, but before they lowered them again to kindle the fire, Taliesin arose and spoke:

"Will this sacrifice be sufficient?"

All answered, "It will be sufficient."

Taliesin said, "Ancient Druids, you know the prophecy that was spoken before the days of the wondrous Merlin,

"That the perfect sacrifice was the blood of one man that had a woman for his mother, and had no man for his father."

The Arch-druid answered, "Find us such a one, and we will sacrifice him."

Taliesin said, "You seek not that which

* The sun, "Jês ys Plenydd."

† Supposed to be the sacred or Druidic name of the Hexel ground of Yar, i. e. Brading Haven.

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is good, according to prophecy; but you sacrifice to the evil spirits of the deep. You have corrupted the worship of the Cimri; they worshipped from error, not knowing the accomplishment of the prophecies. A perfect man was found, having a woman for his mother, and having no man for his father. The trunk of a tree which you reverence, having extended arms, which you call divine and holy—what is it?" *

One by one the Druids confessed that they knew not the mystery.

Taliesin said, "It is the form of the cross, upon which the all-sufficient sacrifice was offered. Listen to me, and you shall hear the words of salvation."

The Arch-druid and the Druids rose in anger. The words of the Arch-druid:

"The stranger betrays our mystery;
His words defile the holy circle.
A treble expiation must be made."

He made a signal. Two of the strongest

* It is called by some authors the Druidical Tau, being in the form of a capital T.

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of the Druids seized Taliesin and the other baptized stranger. They carried them up a ladder on to the top of the pile, and fastened them in the wicker vessel that rested there, which they called Ceridwen. Then the Arch-druid raised his torch again. They lower their torches together. The fire crackles in the dry brushwood—flames and smoke arise.

The Arch-druid said, "The red fire is mounting with its burning heat. The vengeance due to us shower upon them. Ancient Druids, all you——"

But his words were interrupted, for lightnings flashed across his eyes, blinding his sight; and the thunder rolled across the heavens its terrible sound. It ceased. There was a silence like death, save that the fire crackled in the pile.

Then there was heard a rushing sound, like a winter's torrent when it comes from the hills in power.

The water rose from the holy well in a column fifty feet high, and spread its deluge around.

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Then came a dreadful roaring, like all the storms of the ocean roaring together. The sea came rushing in upon them in one mighty wave. Trees and men were hurled along in one wild ruin. The flaming pile was also swept away; but the osier vessel floated. The three baptized strangers stepped in safety on the land.

But the sea never returned again to its deep; and the Hexel ground of Yar, the sacred Gabhanodurum, still lies beneath a wide lake. The oaks there no longer swing their branches to the breeze; but the waves roll over the spot, vexed by the storms of winter.

"What do you think of that, Mr. Elder?" said the antiquary, when I returned him his manuscript.

"Why," said I, "it is certainly the most extraordinary tale you have favoured me with; but is there any evidence of its being a really ancient writing?"

"I have not been able to discover any-

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thing respecting the actual date of its composition; but from a number of parallel passages that I have found in other British writers, the greater part of it must undoubtedly be very old; and it does not appear to me that any portion of it is of later date, or different in style or language, from the rest."

"There is one thing, Mr. Winterblossom, that I must confess I have my doubts about, which is, the antiquity, as a Druidical record, of the prophecy of the sufficient sacrifice being the blood of one man who had a woman for his mother, but no man for his father."

"That is certainly the most curious part of the whole. I am not aware that this prophecy is extant anywhere else in the Celtic language. The following passage from the life of Merlin appears, however, to be something to the purpose.

"King Vortigern being forced by the Saxons to fly into Wales, where, thinking to fortify himself, he began to lay the foundation of a castle called Generon, or Gwayneren, on

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the west side of the river Grana, upon a hill called Cloaricus.

"When Vortigern's architects had caused the hill to be digged, and the foundation to be laid, on which to erect this new structure, after the weak men had digged the circuit of the place where the great stones were to be set in order, they were no sooner laid in the hollow of the earth but they instantly sank down, and were swallowed up and no more seen: at which the workmen wondered, and the king himself was much astonished. Therefore he commanded a cessation from the work for the present, and sent to the bards and wizards to know the reason of the prodigy, or at least what it might portend. They returned him for answer, that those stones could never be laid together, or the place built upon, till they were cemented with the blood of a man-child, who was born of a mother, but had no man for his father.'*

"I look upon this as one of the numerous tales of antiquity which were literally be-

* See the "Life of Merlin," surnamed Ambrosius, p. 51. London.

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lieved by the vulgar; but were only fables, having a hidden meaning to those who understood the mystery. The writer of the Life of Merlin was, however, clearly not among the latter; for, apparently, being aware that ordinary foundation-stones do not require child's blood as a cement, he concludes that the saying had no meaning at all; for he goes on:—

"'With this answer the king was satisfied; the soothsayers departed from him (not meanly glad that they had put him off, according to our English word, with a flam or delirement) without any disparagement to their art and cunning.'

"You will also remember, that when Alexander the Great sought to obtain an universal monarchy, he persuaded the Egyptian priests to declare that Jupiter Ammon had visited Olympia, his mother, in the form of a dragon, and filled her with this human deity.

"The history of antiquity was full of attempts of this sort to force the fulfilment of ancient prophecies; and this is probably the

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cause of human sacrifice in all countries where it was practised, sometimes merely to deceive the people; sometimes those who perpetuated these enormities deceived themselves.

"There is one peculiarity in the tale you have just read, which I ought to mention, and which is, that although the language of the Coranied must have been a dialect resembling the Irish or Scotch Celts, while the language of the Cimbri and the men of Galidin probably resembled that of the modern Welch; yet no part of the tale appears to belong to the Gaelic-Celtic language. The reason of this can only be guessed at. I suppose that it was from this cause; that the Coranied, being few in number, adopted the language of the people among whom they settled, or from the circumstance that the Druidic mysteries and triads being handed down in the same words, the language and the mysteries naturally went together, or perhaps both of these causes united. It was not uncommon for ancient tribes, even when conquerors, to adopt the language of the conquered. It

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also rather appears from the text that Coranied adopted the mysteries of the Cimbri, with some additions of their own."

"So you then believe," said I, "that everything occurred as described in your story."

"Certainly not; but it must be confessed that it is very singular that when Brading Haven was drained by some Dutch engineers in the reign of James I., a well cased with stone was found about the middle of the harbour. But there is another fact much more extraordinary."

"What is that?" I asked.

"The bones of giants have been dug up at Brading."

"Really!" said I.

"Ah!" said he, "it is altogether a very curious affair." *

* The churchyard of Brading is spacious, and of great antiquity. It gives indications of having been the burial-place of some of the "rude forefathers of the isle," prior to the introduction of Christianity. This opinion is supported by the fact that human bones have been found, which do not accord with the stature of the present race of men;

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Early in the morning after, while Mr. Winterblossom and myself were sitting at breakfast, a message was sent up to us that Ragged Jack wished to see us about something very particular. We directed him to be shown up. He came in, looking very important; and edging himself up to the elbow of the antiquary's chair, he said, in a low mysterious tone, that he knew of something very much out of the common way, and very extraordinary, that he could tell him.

Mr. Winterblossom inquired what it was.

"It's a man that never was known to tell a lie in his life, who has seen a real ghost—that's what it is."

"Where did the ghost-seer live?"

"At Freshwater."

Upon which the antiquary remarked, "That is a long way off, and probably when we get there we shall not find him at home."

"Oh, sir, you are sure to find him at

and one so embedded in the rock as to be invisible till part of the rock was removed, and when separated from its bed, it instantly crumbled to dust between the fingers.—*See Beauties of the Isle of Wight*, p. 77. Portsea.

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home; he never leaves his cottage, sir; he is stone blind."

"Stone blind!" said Mr. Winterblossom, drawing himself up. "You may withdraw. You may walk down stairs. A man stone blind see a spirit! we won't trouble you."

"Sir," said Ragged Jack, "he is stone blind now, but he could see as well as you or I when he saw the thing. I assure you, sir, it's very curious."

"Well, then, if that is the case, you may walk on first, and we will overtake you in a car."

In the morning we started, and when we had got a few miles along the road, Mr. Winterblossom said, "Down here on the right is a narrow inlet of the sea, at present nearly choked with mud, called Newtown Harbour. There, there was once a flourishing town, anciently called Franchville. It was burnt and destroyed by the French in one of their raids in the island. It was afterwards rebuilt, and took the name of Newtown. A solitary cottage is now left there, though its streets still remain in the shape of green

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lanes: and it is singular that they yet retain the same names as when they were inhabited. The two principal ones are still called Gold street and Silver street. I forget the names of the others, or indeed whether they are at this moment remembered."

I remarked, "Is it not very curious that these names should be still known after the houses have so long disappeared?"

"It is," he said, "very unusual; but perhaps it may be accounted for by the fact of a singular legend relating to it being still rife among the neighbouring inhabitants. If you will attend, I will relate it to you."

THE STORY OF THE PIED PIPER OF NEWTOWN.

Newtown, anciently called Franchville, was once dreadfully infested with rats, so much so that the borough was scarcely habitable. They ate their way into all the granaries, and rooms, and cupboards. Scarcely any food could be secured from their attacks.

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Even the wine, and mead, and beer, they drank; which they contrived in this manner; they gnawed a hole in the top of the cask, and drank as far as their noses could reach; then one of them dipped in his tail, which the others sucked; and he had his suck at another's tail in return.

The cradles of their infants were obliged to be watched night and day, to prevent the rats eating their noses or nibbling their fingers. But with all their care a great many of the children were maimed before they had grown strong enough to defend themselves.

Numerous expedients had been tried to destroy or to reduce the number of these vermin. At one time a number of cats were introduced, and fine fun it was for the old cats. They had rare sport in hunting, and lived merrily upon rats' flesh. But it was otherwise with the kittens; for whenever the rats found a kitten by himself, they assembled in a body and attacked him, and ate him up; so that the breed of cats could not be long continued.

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At another time they made an attempt to poison the rats, and indeed they destroyed a great number, but the stench that arose from their dead bodies in the streets, and in their holes, and in every part of their houses, brought an infectious fever upon the inhabitants, so that a great number died.

Large rewards had been offered to any one who would clear the place of rats. Rat-catchers had arrived there from all parts of the country, expecting to make their fortunes. But their attempts always ended in disappointment to themselves and their employers. The rats continued to nibble, and gnaw, and multiply, in spite of the constant warfare carried on against them.

One day there came a wandering piper to the town, fantastically dressed. There was hardly any colour or shade that was not to be found in some corner of his party-coloured clothing; this procured him the name of the Pied Piper. He called upon the mayor, and asked him what reward he should receive, if he destroyed every single rat in the borough of Franchville. The mayor sent the crier

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round to assemble the burgesses in the Town-hall, to consider what reward should be given. The debate lasted a considerable time, for the love of economy and the fear of the rats struggled hard against one another. The fear of the rats, however, appeared in the end to prevail, for they decided upon giving five hundred pounds (an enormous sum in those days) when the rats should be extinct.

The piper accepted the offer, and left the Town-hall, playing a shrill tune upon his pipe. To the utter astonishment of the by-standers, a great number of rats rushed out from the holes round the foundations of the Town-hall, and followed after his heels.

As he went along, all the rats came out of their holes and trotted after him. Every fifty yards he stopped, and turned round and played a particular flourish upon his pipe, just to give time for the young little toddling rats to overtake their stronger relations. Up Silver street he went, and down Gold street, and so on to the harbour. The people flocked after him at a distance, showering blessings upon his head. But they could not

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get any where near him, on account of the ground being perfectly covered with rats.

When he had led his flock of rats down to the water, he got into a boat with high sides to it, so that no rat could get into it. He then entered the boat and shoved off into the middle. The rats crowded round, and appeared to listen with delight to his music, as they wagged their tails in the water. Thus he continued piping to them till the tide had fallen, and the boat was left aground on the mud. But the rats, still infatuated with the melody of his notes, kept paddling round him, until one by one they perished, smothered in the mud. Before the water rose again, not a rat was left alive.

When he landed, he went to the mayor to demand his promised reward. But the danger had now ceased, and the love of economy resumed its reign. They told him that they had thought it would have been a work of great labour and difficulty: indeed they had not anticipated that the reward would ever have been called for, or

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they never would have offered so large a sum; but as he had certainly done them a great benefit, they would not object to give him fifty pounds, which they considered to be very high wages for the trouble he had had.

The Pied Piper demanded his reward according to the agreement; and when he could not obtain it, he swore he would be revenged upon them; but his menaces were only treated with contempt.

The Pied Piper said, "Very well," and turning round he marched off, and strutted down the street as before. But as the inhabitants knew that every rat had been destroyed, they felt under no apprehension of his piping them back again, so that they merely laughed at him as he walked down the street, piping a merry tune. The old people ridiculed him as he passed by, but all the children ran after him, hopping and dancing to the music, and quizzing his party-coloured clothing.

There was something irresistible in his tunes to the ears of youth. They left their

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games and their play, and tripped after the Pied Piper. They ran away from their parents and guardians, saying, that they must join in the dance after the Spotted Piper.

Down Silver-street he walked, and up Gold-street, the old people laughing at him, and the children dancing after him. Up the town he went, and into the forest. All the children of the town danced and shouted after him, as if they thought it the veriest fun in the world. The elder folks listened to the quavering of his shrill pipe, as he threaded his way through the old oak trees, till at length the sounds died away in the distance. They waited for the return of their children, but they never returned again. What became of them nobody ever knew: for neither the Pied Piper nor the children were ever heard of again. Thus the Pied Piper had his revenge.

In the course of time the remaining inhabitants of Franchville either died or became feeble from old age; but the children who would have succeeded them had gone off,

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nobody knew where. Those who had been born since the time of the Pied Piper were still in their infancy. The borough, in short, consisted only of old men and children.

The French unfortunately chose this period to make an attack upon the Isle of Wight. They landed at Franchville, met with no opposition, and burnt it to the ground. This was the end of Franchville.

Buildings, however, were again erected there, and fresh inhabitants came: and the place was called Newtown. The very change of name shows how complete the destruction of the old borough must have been.

"Pray, Mr. Winterblossom," said I, when he had concluded his tale, "what do you consider this story to be? for it can hardly be supposed really to have happened in the manner you relate it. Do you suppose it to be the invention of some story-teller—a mere

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fable?—or do you think it was founded upon some event that occurred at Newtown?"

"I do not think that anything of the sort ever happened at Franchville, nor do I consider it to be the invention of a story-teller."

"That I do not understand," said I; "it must either have happened, or it must have been invented.

"Not so hasty—not so hasty," replied the antiquary, rubbing his spectacles; "I consider it to be one of the ancient popular tales that were told and believed by the old inhabitants of Franchville. Now the popular tales, or, as we may call them, the mythology of a country, are properly neither the history of what took place there, nor mere inventions; but they are the traditions of the ancestors of the inhabitants, before they settled in their present possessions. Those stories that have their parallel traditions preserved in very distant and different countries, are traditions handed down from the earliest periods of the world; and relate generally to Noah and the flood, or to the events that took place at

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Babel before the scattering abroad of nations. Of this description are the Druidical traditions of Delan,—Deucalion, Saturn, and Janus* of the Greeks and Romans, relating to Noah. Most of the heathen mythology, together with our tales of King Arthur and St. George and the Dragon, Brute, Uther Pendragon, and many others, relate to the times of Babel. And Nimrod appears to be the character whose deeds were celebrated in the greatest number of romances."

"Do you mean to say," said I, "that Arthur was never king of England?"

"Certainly not," replied he; "the history of King Arthur was just one of the traditions of Nimrod, the mighty hunter."†

* Janus was represented by the Romans as having two faces—the meaning of which is, that he looked back to the antediluvian world, and forward to the postdiluvian. His temple was shut in time of peace, and open in time of war; which means that whilst men and animals remained in the ark they lived in peace with one another, but after the door was opened they fought and quarrelled as they did before they entered into it.

† See Nimrod, or a Discourse on Certain Passages of History and Fable. London, 1828. A work highly interesting to the real antiquarian.

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"So then you really consider the Pied Piper to be a Babylonian, or perhaps an antediluvian rat-catcher?"

"I consider no such thing," said the antiquary rather sharply, for I fancy that he thought I was quizzing him; "I do not believe that there ever was any such person as the Pied Piper in existence at any time. The story was probably a mystery; the meaning of which was known to the learned, though it was perhaps taken literally by the vulgar. It might, for instance, have been a mystery of the confusion of tongues and the dispersion of the tower builders from Babel."

"Why, certainly," said I, "it might; but then, on the other hand, it might not. Pray what reason have you for supposing that it was not just a fiction invented by some story-teller for the amusement of his audience? We are generally apt to search for causes at too great a depth: for the most part they lie very near the surface."

"That is a very good general rule, but it does not happen to be applicable in the present case. It is impossible that the story

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could have been invented by a Franchville or Isle of Wight story-teller, because a similar tale is told as having happened to the town of Hamel in Brunswick, where the rats were drowned in the river Weser, and the children were piped into a hole in a hill-side that closed after them. The story goes on to say—'that a boy being lame, came somewhat lagging behind the rest, and seeing this that happened, returned presently back and told what he had seen; forthwith began great lamentation among the parents for their children, and men were sent out with all diligence, both by land and by water, to inquire if aught could be heard of them; but, with all the inquiry they could possibly use, nothing more than as aforesaid could of them be understood. In memory whereof it was then ordained that from thenceforth no drumme, pipe, or other instrument, should be sounded in the street leading to the gate through which they passed; nor no ostery to be there holden. And it was also established that from that time forward in all publike writings that should be made in that towne, after the

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date therein set downe of the yeere of our Lord, the date of the yeere of the going forth of their children should be added, the which they have accordingly ever since continued.' * From this similitude of stories there is a very strong probability that the history of the Pied Piper relates to some event which occurred before the Saxons migrated from Germany."

"All this may be very true, Mr. Winterblossom, but is it not going rather far back for the origin of the story of the rat-catcher to suppose it came from the tower of Babel? might it not be a very old story, and yet not quite so old as that?"

"Your reasoning, Mr. Elder, is very natural for a person who has only paid a superficial attention to this subject."

"Ahem!" said I.

The antiquary continued. "The reason why popular tales and traditions are either comparatively modern, or go back, as it were, to the very origin of nations, is this: after the

* *See* "*Restitution of Decayed Intelligence*," *by Richard Verstegan. London*, 1534, p. 85.

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flood, mankind were directed by divine command to spread themselves over the face of the earth to repeople it. Probably no inconsiderable part of the crime of the tower-builders of Babel was their opposition to this command, their wishing to make themselves a name; that is, to be a powerful, civilised, and luxurious nation, instead of scattering themselves over the boundless wastes."

"Civilised!" said I; "do you suppose that the state of society then approached at all to our modern ideas of civilisation?"

"Very nearly indeed," replied he. "All the knowledge of the East at the present time is but the remains of a more perfect state of civilisation of a very remote antiquity. The Indians now calculate eclipses from tables that have been handed down to them from very ancient times. There are also still in existence some very beautiful and copious remains of ancient literature in a language which Sir William Jones affirms to be more perfect than the Greek, and more copious than the Latin—the Sanscrit—the oldest language known. From this high state of civi-

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lisation mankind degenerated after the dispersion. Then commenced the era of modern civilisation."

We overtook our squire, Ragged Jack, as we went down the hill to Freshwater, and having left our car at the hotel, we followed him on foot to the residence of the blind Ghost-seer. As we went along, I proposed to the antiquary that we should cross-question the Ghost-seer closely about the legs of his ghost, as the best test for trying whether it was a spirit or a living creature.

The antiquary replied, "We will do so: but it does not appear that ghosts and spirits used always to show any legs at all. There appear to have been two distinct species of apparitions; one that did not attempt to disguise what they really were, and who either stood still, appearing and vanishing in the same spot, or glided along without moving their feet; these were called ghosts or goblins. The others, who attempted to

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imitate living people in their walk, from their limping and awkward way of going, were termed hobgoblins or hopgoblins. However, it's all one now."

"I beg your pardon," said I; "I do not quite understand what you mean by 'all one now.'"

"Why, I mean," said he, "that whatever the distinction might have been, it does not signify much to us now, as, whatever happened formerly, we are not likely to see either one or the other."

Jack rapped with his knuckles at the door of a low thatched cottage, and ushered us into the presence of the blind old man, as two particular friends of his that wished to make his acquaintance. The blind man begged us to be seated; after which Ragged Jack, to our great annoyance, entered into a long conversation about the state of the weather and the price of bacon. In vain we made signs to him to proceed to business: Jack, however, in return, only winked, and nodded, and shook his head; meaning, I sup-

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pose, to intimate that the whole management of the proceedings should be left to him; and then began talking to the blind man about the state of his rheumatics.

We made signs of impatience again. Jack, as before, nodded and winked, and then commenced most provokingly discussing parish politics, about the late churchwardens and the parish constable.

I lost all patience, and interrupted him. "Pray, my good man, did you not once see something very extraordinary?"

"Ah! indeed I did, but I do not like talking about it. Some people tell me that it is wrong to talk about such things—some people only make fun of me—and some people say . . . . ."

"Some people say what?" I asked.

"Why they say that I am just an old fool for believing such nonsense."

"It was a ghost that you saw, was it not?" asked Mr. Winterblossom.

"That's just it," said he, "but I do not like talking about it."

"What did it look like?" said I.—No answer.

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Jack winked and poked the tip of his nose upwards with his fore-finger.

"Did it look tall?" said I.

"Very lofty," he answered.

"And pale?"

"Yes, she looked quite white like."

"And pray where was it you saw her?"

"Why, some way out at sea, when I was going over smuggling in a boat. I have never been smuggling since, and never would again."

"Could you see her legs at all?" asked the antiquary.

"Legs! no, what should she do with her legs, unless she were ashore?"

The antiquary looked at me significantly, and I continued my questions.

"Pray what attitude was she in? what did she seem to be doing?"

"She was in stays," was the reply.

"Ah!" said the antiquary, "I suppose some unfortunate creature that died of love and disappointment."

"Dear! dear! dear!" said the blind man, "I do not see how that could be. Who ever

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heard of a revenue cutter dying of love and disappointment?"

"A revenue cutter!" said I.

"A revenue cutter!" exclaimed the antiquary.

"A revenue cutter!" cried Ragged Jack, impudently feigning amazement, with his hands lifted up.

"Now, pray, my good friend," said I, "let us hear the story as it really happened."

"Well, then, I will just tell you all about it.

"THE GHOST STORY.

"It was a hazy evening when we started in our little vessel from the island, that is to say, I, Jack Green, and Paddy Murphy, who was an Irishman. The wind was somewhere about west, and the weather looking wildish. I said to myself, when we started, that I thought it was going to blow. But they looked plaguy sharp after us just then, though not quite the same as they do now, with a man with a sword and pistol stuck

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under every furze bush along the coast—and a great shame it is.

"Well, we had not got many leagues out to sea before it began to blow great guns, which ayn't mighty comfortable in a small craft that has got no deck but a little cuddy forward. I thought that it was going to be my last trip athwart Channel."

"And then," said I, "I suppose you saw this apparition?"

"That's a hard word," continued the blind man, "and I don't just know what it means; but I know that it blew terrible hard. We could not show any sail at all, and we were half full of water. Ah, sir, it's an awful thing for poor thoughtless creatures like we to find ourselves going down to our watery graves without a minute's quiet allowed us to make our peace with God and man.

"We were struggling—struggling for our lives. When there came a lull, we had just time to think of our poor wives and little dear ones, and just to try a bit of a prayer; but ah, sir, it's no such easy thing to pray, when one has not been in the habit of it.

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"'There is one chance left for us,' said Jack to me: 'let us lash all our spars together, and try to ride it out under their lea.' Well, so we did. We got our oars and our bowsprit, our boat-hook, and our little topsail with the yard to it, and one or two other loose spars. Well, we made them fast together, and lashed the end of our cable to them. In this manner, you see, we kept our craft's head to the wind, when we could not do anything with a sail at all. For three long hours we kept pumping for our lives, up to our knees in water. The wind at length began to fall a little, and we felt our hopes a little more cheery; but just as we were beginning to be rather more comfortable, Paddy Murphy screamed out—I think I hear his voice ringing in my ear now—'We are run down!' Ah, that is the great danger in a little craft laying to in the Channel. A great vessel comes rolling on, and drives over you. They just feel a slight shock—they hear a death-cry from the poor drowning men; but they cut through you as they would a whisp of sea-weed, and then

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they are alone again, plunging into the hollow of the waves.

"Well, sir, when Paddy Murphy cried out, we looked: and sure enough we saw a great cutter close-hauled, driving right on for us. Her bowsprit seemed to bury itself deep in the water, and a heavy sea tumbled into her, and then her bow tossed up into the air, so near that her bowsprit appeared to be right over us. We gave ourselves over entirely, when she suddenly luffed up. 'She tacks!' I cried, 'she tacks!—we are saved! she will soon be on the other tack.' But on the other tack she never got. We heard her sails and sheets rattling, as her head was turned into the wind; but she missed her stays—she got stern way upon her—she went down stern foremost: the next sea rolled over her. 'The Lord have mercy on their souls!' we all cried. Ah, sir, many a time before we had wished them all drowned—many a curse we had heaped upon them; but when their turn actually came, we felt for them just, if you will believe me, sir, as if they had been our own children. Sir," said

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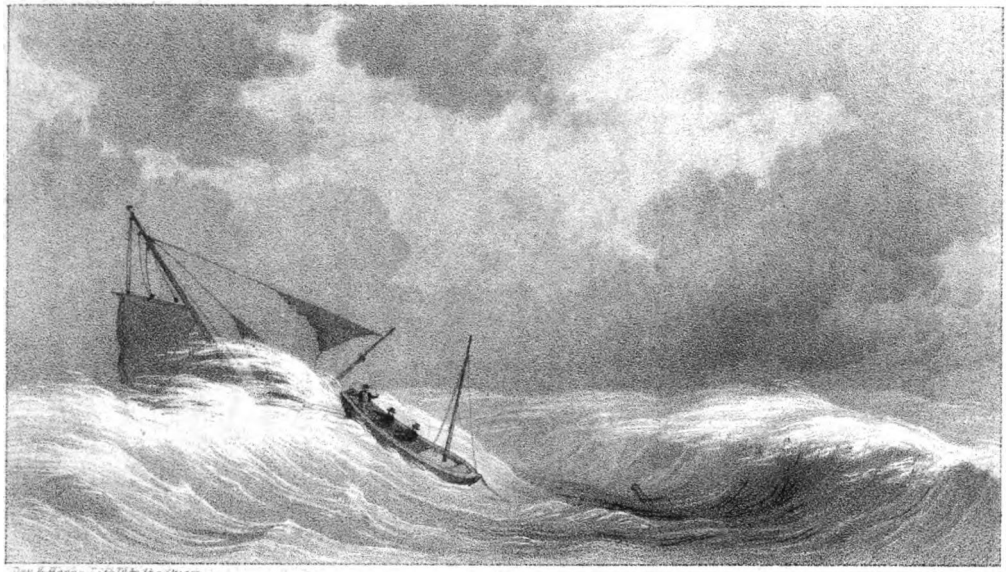

"She missed stays_She got stern way upon her_She went down stern foremost"

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he, speaking with great feeling, "they put down their helm just for the chance of saving our lives. Who would have expected that from men who earned their livelihood by hunting us down? They were fine fellows, though, that they were, though they sailed in a cutter.

"By-and-bye the weather cleared up, and we had a tolerable passage over to Cherbourg. There was not much chance of our being picked up as we came back, we thought. We had very fine weather to return with, and we had got three parts of our voyage back without seeing any sail, except one or two big square-rigged vessels working down Channel, when, all of a sudden, close to us, right on for our bowsprit-end, we saw the identical self-same revenue cutter hove to just before us. We could see the people on board just as plain as we ever saw anybody in our lives before. There was one man standing at the helm in a pea-jacket, and the skipper, in a gold-laced cap, walking up and down the deck, looking as comfortable and as important as if he never had been drowned at

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all. Indeed, we never would have believed that such a thing could have happened to them, if we had not seen it with our own eyes."

Here Mr. Winterblossom shook his head; and Ragged Jack, probably thinking that it would please the old gentleman, shook his head also. Little was he aware of the deep erudition that was conveyed in the antiquary's shake of the head. The blind man continued his story.

"The skipper then took a speaking-trumpet off the companion, and hailed us to come alongside. Oh! such a horrible, dismal, hollow sound; it was more like the rolling of a distant clap of thunder than the voice of a living being; but then, sir, you must consider that the poor fellow must have been dead at that time somewhat more than six-and-thirty hours. I never felt what it was to be regularly afeard before; the hair of our heads felt as if it was bristling and standing on end, almost, as I may say, like a hair-brush; except indeed Jack Green's, for you must know he had been quite bald at

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least a year two before that time. Paddy Murphy crossed himself; for you see he was nothing better than a Papist. It gave us, to be sure, a very nervous creeping sort of a feel, to think that we were going to be taken prisoners on board a vessel that was not at all a real one, and which was sailed by a crew of men that we had seen drowned with our own eyes, only just the day before.

"So we sheered off, and tried our best to get away from her, expecting, however, every moment to have a ball sent through our rigging; for that's just the way with those fellows: if you don't heave to directly they want you, they fire at your rigging, and if you do not take any notice of that, they blaze away whack at your hull, till they sink you or bring you to. However, they never fired at us at all, which we thought was odd."

"Perhaps their powder was wet," said Ragged Jack, winking his eye, and looking very knowing.

"I turned round to see what they were after," continued the blind man, not taking

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any notice of Jack's observation, "when, to my amazement, there was no cutter at all to be seen. In the spot where she was lying there was just a bit of a mist. I verily believe that she melted away into a little damp foggy cloud.

"We crowded all sail to get from her, with a nice steady breeze. The evening set in dark and cloudy, with a little mizzling rain; and at length we thought we were pretty nigh the end of our voyage, though the weather was so thick that we could not make the land. We kept a good look-out, and hove the lead every now and then. Presently the clouds began to clear away ahead of us, making what we call a bright eye in the sky. We expected every moment to make the Needles light, or the high land of St. Catherine's — when what do you suppose we saw?"

"I really can't tell," said Ragged Jack, coolly twirling his thumbs.

"There was the self-same revenue cutter again hove to, just as we had left her leagues and leagues behind. She was some way off

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from us this time, so we cut away our tubs and altered our course; and, thank Heaven, we got home safe, without falling in again with either cutter, or ghost of a cutter."

We complimented our blind friend upon his story, with which Mr. Winterblossom was indeed very much pleased.

The blind man observed that as we seemed to have taken so much interest in what he had told us, he would, if we wished it, relate a very curious thing that happened after the death of Jack Green.

We told him that we should like very much to hear it.

THE STORY OF JACK GREEN.

"Well, sirs," said he, "you must know that Jack Green used to be a very merry, agreeable fellow. Everybody knew him, and everybody liked him. He had his joke and his bit of fun for every one, and yet somehow or other he very seldom said anything

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unkind or ill-natured. Now, sirs, I think that is a great deal to say in favour of a person that everybody thinks clever. Well, sir, as I hinted to you before, in the course of time his turn came. We were all sorry for him, and there was no one more sorry than Paddy Murphy, who had always been a particular friend of his. Everybody almost attended his funeral, and amongst others Paddy Murphy and myself, though at that time my eyesight was well nigh gone. Well, sirs, Jack Green had been dead and buried somewhat more than a week, when one evening Paddy Murphy comes in to me, looking very pale. 'Thomas,' says he to me, 'I feel very uncomfortable.'

"'Tayn't the cholera, I hope,' says I: for at that time folks were making a great bother about the cholera.

"'It's nothing at all of that sort,' says he.

"'What is it, then?' says I.

"'Well, then, I'll tell you,' says he. 'It was up the shoot* I was going all by myself, except just my little dog. I had been taking

* In the Isle of Wight shoot signifies a hill.

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a glass at old Tim's and was going home; when just as I had got past the big elm tree, a man comes across the road to me, and slaps me upon the back, and says, 'Ah! Paddy, my honey, by the powers I am glad to see you; and how do you find yourself in health; and is it from ould Tim's that your coming? Sure it's a week and more that I have not seen you.'

"It was honest Jack Green's voice; in short, it was Jack Green himself. That was just the sort of joking way that he used to talk to me. I tell you I was so glad to see his merry face again, that I just forgot all about how he had died, and how I had gone to his funeral more than a week before.

"Says he to me, 'We'll have another merry evening together some of these nights, and if you cross the Channel for tubs again, maybe I'll be with you. It's drinking you have been already to-day?'

"'A little,' says I.

"'Besides, I must be going home,' says he.

"Just then we passed by where the road goes off towards the churchyard. I gave a

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bit of a sigh, and said to myself, 'Poor Jack Green, you lie low and cold now—there's nobody more sorry for it than myself;' when all of a sudden I remembered that it was just Jack Green and nobody else that I was speaking to, and sure I had not the least doubt in the world about it. But my head was somehow or other a little bothered, and I tried to remember whose funeral it was I had been at: still I could not help thinking it was his own. Thinks I to myself, I'll just ask him whether it was himself or no that I had seen buried the week before, though certainly it was a mighty queer question to ask him.

"I turned round towards him. He was gone. Maybe he's just stepped on. So I ran on after him. And sure enough I saw him again, just turning the corner into his own door.

"This is the story as Paddy Murphy told it to me. I walked up with him to where Jack Green used to live. We found that the folks there had all gone to bed, and nobody had been near them since sunset."

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We thanked the old man for his story, and he appeared to be much pleased with the satisfaction he had given to his hearers. We tried to persuade him to tell us something else; but he repeatedly assured us that he knew nothing that we should care about hearing.

Here his wife, who had come in a short time before, said, "Why, George, you know there is the story of the wonderful egg."

"Why yes," said he, "I know that well enough, and so does everybody about here; but I never like telling it to strangers. They never believe it."

Here Jack put his hand by his mouth, and whispered into the blind man's ear, loud enough, however, for us to hear—"You need not be afraid of that. They'll believe anything."

Thus encouraged, and with a little more coaxing on our part, the blind man gave us the story of

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THE MYSTERIOUS EGG.

"There used to be a cottage somewhere on the hill as you go up towards the Needles—a very poor concern, more like a pig-sty than a Christian's house, in which lived an old woman, who was known by the name of Alice Puckery. She was of a very unsocial nature, and had ways and habits peculiar to herself; always muttering as she hobbled along, no one could hear what.

"She used continually to place an egg on the ledge over the door. There was something very mysterious in this, but as there are always many to be found who say there's no such thing as witchcraft, it was thought by them that the only reason the old hag had for doing this, was to discover whether in her absence her house had been entered or not; for when the door opened, the egg sometimes fell to the ground. I am rather inclined to believe, from the words which she muttered over the egg when it fell, that there was some spell in it; because occasionally, when it was observed

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to fall, a sulphurous smoke and smell arose. Many were the speculations as to why she placed the egg there; no one had ever been known to keep an egg in that particular way before—over a door-way; why should it be over a door-way? It was thought by many that it was placed there to bewitch any person she might take a dislike to. It was supposed by others that the influence of the egg was varied, according to whether it was placed with the broad end, or the narrow end, or the side, towards the wall. How its influence affected people, no one could make out exactly; some were suddenly taken ill immediately, or soon after passing under it; to others good luck happened. One man, of the name of Theophilus Browning, shortly after passing under it, had the extraordinary luck of finding a red silk purse, containing twenty sovereigns, on the road as he went home. It is believed that on that day the egg was placed crossways, a thing which had not been known to be done before or since.

"A young woman, of the name of Sarah Primrose, called at the old hag's cottage, and

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passed under the egg; she had not proceeded half a mile from the door before she was met by a person who told her that the young man to whom she was going to be married was dangerously ill:—he died that night.

"Though the old hag kept four or five speckled fowls, it was very generally believed that the eggs were not laid by any of them, or were indeed the produce of any other bird.

"Sometimes the egg appeared to be longer in shape than at others, sometimes shorter. It was thought that the egg which was placed there on Friday was longer shaped and thinner like, perhaps a little trifle smaller, than those on a Monday and Tuesday, which were rather, as a body might say, short and dumpy ones. This was observed to be the case for three successive weeks, during which they had been watched.

"She had been repeatedly asked why she placed the egg on the ledge over the door, to which she always replied, 'that she put it there because she chose to put it there; no one had any business to question her

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right to put it there. The shelf was her own shelf, put up by John Stubbins the carpenter, at her own expense, and she would tell nobody why she put the egg there." One day—a Thursday afternoon—a tabby cat was seen sitting on the ledge over the door, beside the egg:—that night the clergyman of the parish died!"

Ragged Jack gave a loud yawn, and said, "Is that all?" For which, however, he received a reprimand from the antiquary.

Having made a suitable present to the blind man, we returned to our car.

"Is it not extraordinary," said I, "that the same person who related the pretty tale of the loss of the revenue cutter, should tell us that trumpery story about the egg?"

"Not at all," replied the antiquary, with a sigh. "The intellects of an old man seem at one time luminous, and then on a sudden are involved in darkness, like the flame of a lamp at the point of extinction. Ah! I feel myself that I get prosy and twaddly at times. Have you not observed it, Mr. Elder?"

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"How can you say so, Mr. Winterblossom? I have never observed anything of the sort."

After we had proceeded some distance in our car, we got out to walk up a hill. Here we overtook an elderly gentleman, who was slowly ascending the hill by the side of a low pony carriage. He instantly recognised Mr. Winterblossom.

"Is it you, indeed, Mr. ——— ?" said the antiquary. "Yours is the first familiar face that I have fallen in with since my return to the island of my birth."

They then entered into a long conversation about old times, which, though doubtless very agreeable to themselves, would probably not be found interesting to the general reader. The conversation, however, ended in an invitation for the antiquary and myself to spend the day and dine with him on the morrow; which was accepted.

The following day we paid our visit; and after dinner I mentioned to our host the work in which I was engaged, and asked him whether he could give me any assistance. To

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which he replied, "There is a curious tale connected with a family in this neighbourhood which I shall be happy to relate to you, but only upon the condition that neither my name, nor any name connected with the story, be repeated.

"THE IRON CHEST.

"That human souls prognosticate things to come, at the time they are separating from the body, is scarcely to be denied. The story I am about to relate is one well authenticated. I could show you the spot where tradition says it took place. The evening is fine; suppose we take a walk to see it. The tale will be more impressively told when the shades of night gather around us."

We made no objection, and accordingly set out.

The sun was just going down in the soft calm of a summer evening, when we began to ascend the heights of ——. In a little while we reached a clump of elms. Everything was as silent as a churchyard: not a crea-

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ture to be seen on the road or in the fields. There is always a solemn feeling which accompanies a tale of supernatural wonder. We walked on to where the trees rose highest and thickest on each side of the road.

"You are now," said he, "approaching what is called by the country people 'the haunted grove,' which formerly no one would pass after dusk. There lived close by, an eccentric person of an avaricious, cringing, grasping mind, who was commonly taken notice of for an habitual saying, by way of interjection to almost everything, '*You say true—you say true—you are in the right.*' He was an attorney of some eminence, and, from a kind of sneaking acquiescence towards his superiors, gained the good will and patronage of a neighbouring squire. Indeed this saying of his, which soon became a sort of proverb in the country, will better convey to your understanding an idea of his character, than any description I can give.

"In due course of time the squire died, and was succeeded, as every one supposed, by his nephew, a child of about ten years of age.

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The day of interment came, and the relatives assembled for the opening of the will. A great iron chest was brought into the room, with three locks to it, in which were all the writings and documents belonging to the late squire's estate. Upon opening it, you may imagine the astonishment of all present, when it was discovered that this shrewd old lawyer was declared heir to everything.

"The parents of the child complained loudly of injustice, but it was to no purpose: and the chest which contained the title to the attorney's ill-gotten property was closed again.

"He remained for some years the undisputed possessor of the estates. But amidst all his wealth he still retained most of his penurious habits, occupying himself a small apartment. This room was in a filthy state, covered with cobwebs, containing no other furniture than a small bedstead without curtains, in which he slept, and the iron chest in which were deposited the important papers. No one was ever allowed to enter his room till his dying day, except the old woman who made his bed.

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"His hour at last came. His medical attendant pronounced his case hopeless. His sister, niece, and nephew's wife, whose husband he had named his heir, were standing by his bedside, when to their horror a noise appeared to come from the great iron chest, as if the bolt of one of the locks clicked back, and was being opened—then another click, as if the second was opening—then the third clicked. The lid of the chest gradually lifted itself up, without any apparent cause, until it stood wide open.

"At this moment the patient, who had not spoken for two days, raised himself up in his bed, and, with his eyes wildly staring at the open chest, cried out, '*You say true—you say true—you are in the right—I will be with you by-and-bye.*'

"The lid of the chest fell again of its own accord. Click went the first lock—click went the second—click went the third,—one lock after another, just as they had opened. Those who were present tried to knock the lid open again, but could not.

"The attorney never spoke afterwards.

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"It is believed that the iron chest still remains in the possession of his family, though they carefully conceal its existence.

"Several of the descendants of the rightful owner are yet living in the island, and will vouch for the truth of this story."

As we drove home to Newport, I asked the antiquary what he thought of the story.

"A mere invention from beginning to end," was the reply: "probably made up by some member of the disinherited family. I can almost prove to you that it never actually took place."

"How so?" said I.

"Why, according to our friend's account, there was no one but the attorney's family present at the time, and we may be pretty sure that they would not relate it."

"But," said I, "there was the old woman who made his bed: might not she have told it?"

"To be sure," said the antiquary; "I never thought of that."

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The next morning Mr. Winterblossom received a letter with a black seal. It contained an account of the death of a friend of his, leaving him executor.

"I must go to London," said he. "But if I am alive and well, and you like to join me, we will take another trip to the Isle of Wight next summer."

I agreed to accompany him back to town, and we started accordingly the next morning.

THE END.

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